

A Fact Sheet for HIGH SCHOOL PARENTS



This sheet has information to help protect your teens from concussion or other serious brain injury.

What Is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury—or TBI—caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. This fast movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging the brain cells.

How Can I Help Keep My Teens Safe?

Sports are a great way for teens to stay healthy and can help them do well in school. To help lower your teens' chances of getting a concussion or other serious brain injury, you should:

- Help create a culture of safety for the team.
 - › Work with their coach to teach ways to lower the chances of getting a concussion.
 - › Emphasize the importance of reporting concussions and taking time to recover from one.
 - › Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
 - › Tell your teens that you expect them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- When appropriate for the sport or activity, teach your teens that they must wear a helmet to lower the chances of the most serious types of brain or head injury. There is no "concussion-proof" helmet. Even with a helmet, it is important for teens to avoid hits to the head.

How Can I Spot a Possible Concussion?

Teens who show or report one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below—or simply say they just "don't feel right" after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body—may have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

Signs Observed by Parents

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Forgets an instruction, is confused about an assignment or position, or is unsure of the game, score, or opponent.
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness (*even briefly*).
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes.
- Can't recall events *prior to* or *after* a hit or fall.

Symptoms Reported by Teens

- Headache or "pressure" in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision.
- Bothered by light or noise.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy.
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems.
- Just not "feeling right," or "feeling down."

Talk with your teens about concussion. Tell them to report their concussion symptoms to you and their coach right away. Some teens think concussions aren't serious or worry that if they report a concussion they will lose their position on the team or look weak. Remind them that *it's better to miss one game than the whole season.*



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GOOD TEAMMATES KNOW:

IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON.

Concussions affect each teen differently. While most teens with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks, some will have symptoms for months or longer. Talk with your teens' health care provider if their concussion symptoms do not go away or if they get worse after they return to their regular activities.



Plan ahead.

What do you want your teen to know about concussion?

What Are Some More Serious Danger Signs to Look Out For?

In rare cases, a dangerous collection of blood (hematoma) may form on the brain after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body and can squeeze the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take your teen to the emergency department right away if, after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, he or she has one or more of these danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other.
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up.
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away.
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching).
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously.



You can also download the CDC *HEADS UP* app to get concussion information at your fingertips. Just scan the QR code pictured at left with your smartphone.

What Should I Do If My Teen Has a Possible Concussion?

As a parent, if you think your teen may have a concussion, you should:

1. Remove your teen from play.
2. Keep your teen out of play the day of the injury. Your teen should be seen by a health care provider and only return to play with permission from a health care provider who is experienced in evaluating for concussion.
3. Ask your teen's health care provider for written instructions on helping your teen return to school. You can give the instructions to your teen's school nurse and teacher(s) and return-to-play instructions to the coach and/or athletic trainer.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a health care provider should assess a teen for a possible concussion. You may not know how serious the concussion is at first, and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days. A teen's return to school and sports should be a gradual process that is carefully managed and monitored by a health care provider.

➤ **Teens who continue to play while having concussion symptoms or who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—have a greater chance of getting another concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing from the first injury can be very serious and can affect a teen for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.**

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To learn more, go to www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP

https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/basics/return_to_sports.html Recovery from Concussion

Keys to Recovery

- Rest
- Take it slow
- Talk to your health care provider

Rest is very important after a concussion because it helps the brain heal. Your child or teen may need to limit activities while he or she is recovering from a concussion. Physical activities or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games may cause concussion symptoms (such as headache or tiredness) to come back or get worse. After a concussion, physical and cognitive activities—such as concentration and learning—should be carefully watched by a medical provider. As the days go by, your child or teen can expect to slowly feel better.

Recovery Tips

Parents can help their child or teen feel better by being active in their recovery:

Rest is Key to Help the Brain Heal

- Have your child or teen get plenty of rest. Keep a regular sleep routine, including no late nights and no sleepovers.
- Make sure your child or teen avoids high-risk/high-speed activities that could result in another bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, such as riding a bicycle, playing sports, climbing playground equipment, and riding roller coasters. Children and teens should not return to these types of activities until their medical provider says they are well enough.
- Share information about concussion with siblings, teachers, counselors, babysitters, coaches, and others who spend time with your child or teen. This can help them understand what has happened and how to help.

Return Slowly to Activities

- When your child's or teen's medical provider says they are well enough, make sure they return to their normal activities slowly, not all at once.
- Talk with their medical provider about when your child or teen should return to school and other activities and how you can help him or her deal with any challenges during their recovery. For example, your child may need to spend less time at school, rest often, or be given more time to take tests.
- Ask your child's or teen's medical provider when he or she can safely drive a car or ride a bike.

Talk to a Medical Provider about Concerns

- Give your child or teen only medications that are approved by their medical provider.
- If your child or teen already had a medical condition at the time of their concussion (such as ADHD or chronic headaches), it may take longer for them to recover from a concussion. Anxiety and depression may also make it harder to adjust to the symptoms of a concussion.

Post-Concussive Syndrome

While most children and teens with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks, some will have symptoms for months or longer. Talk with your children's or teens' health care provider if their concussion symptoms do not go away or if they get worse after they return to their regular activities.

If your child or teen has concussion symptoms that last weeks to months after the injury, their medical provider may talk to you about post-concussive syndrome. While rare after only one concussion, post-concussive syndrome is believed to occur most commonly in patients with a history of multiple concussions.

There are many people who can help you and your family as your child or teen recovers. You do not have to do it alone. Keep talking with your medical provider, family members, and loved ones about how your child or teen is feeling. If you do not think he or she is getting better, tell your medical provider.

Videos: <https://youtu.be/0gnbcu9EQNM>

<https://youtu.be/aZybB8Tom7k>

<https://youtu.be/rYWly-Td2Q4>