

BIG LEAGUE DREAMS®

SPORTS PARKS

CONCUSSION AWARENESS AND SAFETY RECOGNITION FACT SHEET

THE FACTS

- A concussion is a brain injury.
- All concussions are serious.
- Concussions can occur without loss of consciousness or other obvious signs.
- Concussions can occur from blows to the body as well as to the head.
- Concussions can occur in *any* sport.
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.
- Athletes may not report their symptoms for fear of losing playing time.
- Athletes can still get a concussion even if they are wearing a helmet.
- Data suggests that concussions represent 5 to 18 percent of all reported sports injuries.



WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that may be caused by a blow to the head, face, neck or elsewhere on the body with an “impulsive” force transmitted to the head. Concussions can also result from players hitting a hard surface such as the ground or floor, colliding with each other or being hit by a piece of equipment such as a bat or ball.

RECOGNIZING A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION

To help recognize a concussion, watch for the following two events among players during both games and practices:

1. A forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head;
-AND-
2. **Any change** in the player’s behavior, thinking or physical functioning (see Signs and Symptoms below).



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Signs Observed By Coaches

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Is confused about assignment or position.
- Forgets plays.
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent.
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness (even briefly).
- Shows behavior or personality changes.
- Can’t recall events before hit or fall.
- Can’t recall events after hit or fall.

Symptoms Reported By Players

- Headache or “pressure” in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness.
- Double or blurry vision.
- Sensitivity to light.
- Sensitivity to noise.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy.
- Concentration or memory problems.
- Confusion.
- Does not “feel right.”

PLAY BIG.

PREVENTION AND PREPARATION

Coaches, parents and teammates play a key role in preventing concussions and responding to them properly when they occur. Here are some steps they can take to ensure the best outcome for players:

- Educate player's parents and other coaches about concussions. Explain your concerns about concussions and your expectations of safe play. Create an environment that supports reporting, access to proper evaluation and conservative return-to-play.
 - Practice an emergency action plan.
 - Emphasize that protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
 - Review the Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition Fact Sheet with your team to help them recognize the signs of a concussion.
- Insist that safety comes first.
 - Teach players safe-play techniques and encourage them to follow the rules of play.
 - Encourage players to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
 - Encourage players to immediately report symptoms of concussions.
- Prevent long-term problems. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the previous one (hours, days or weeks) can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage and even death.

IF YOU THINK A PLAYER HAS SUSTAINED A CONCUSSION:

Take him/her out of play immediately and allow time for evaluation by a health care professional experienced in evaluating a concussion.

A player who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, either at rest or during exertion, should be **removed immediately from practice or competition** and should not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional. Sports have injury timeouts and substitutions so players can get checked out.



IF A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED:

1. **Remove the player from play.** Look for the signs and symptoms of a concussion if a player has experienced a blow to the head. Do not allow the player to just "shake it off." Each individual will respond to concussions differently.
2. **Advise the player to be evaluated by a health care professional.** Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Advise the player or, if applicable, his or her parents to be evaluated by a certified athletic trainer, physician or other health care professional experienced in concussion evaluation and management.
3. **Allow the player to return to play only with permission from a health care professional with experience in evaluation for concussions.** Allow health care professionals to rely on their clinical skills and protocols in evaluating the player to establish the appropriate time to return to play. A return-to-play progression should occur in an individualized, step-wise fashion with gradual increments in physical exertion and risk of contact.
4. **Develop a game plan.** Players should not return to play until all symptoms have resolved, both at rest and during exertion. Many times, that means they will be out for the remainder of that day. In fact, as concussion management continues to evolve with new science, the care is becoming more conservative and return-to-play time frames are getting longer. Coaches, parents and teammates should have a game plan that accounts for this change.

PLAY BIG.