

HOW CAN I SPOT A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

Children and 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 or Coaches

- 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 Children and Teens

- Headache or “pressure” in the 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, concentration, or memory problems.
- Just not “feeling right,” or “feeling down.”

Talk with your children and teens about concussions. Tell them to report their concussion symptoms to you and their coach right away. Some children and 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. Be sure to remind them that it’s better to miss one game than the whole season.

Concussions affect each child and teen differently. 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.

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 child or 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 is 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.

Children and 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 child or teen for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.

What Should I Do If My Child or Teen Has a Possible Concussion? As a parent, if you think your child or teen may have a concussion, remove your child or teen from play.

1. Keep your child or teen out of play the day of the injury. Have your child or teen seen by a health care provider and return to play only with permission from a health care provider experienced in evaluating concussions.
2. Ask your child's or teen's health care provider for written instructions on helping your child or teen return to school. Give the instructions to your child's or 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. Have a health care provider assess a child or teen for a possible concussion. Concussion signs and symptoms often show up soon after the injury, but some may not appear for hours or days. Give the brain time to heal after a concussion, and have a health care provider manage return to school and sports gradually and carefully.