




ALL



Youth Sports
Concussion
PROGRAM

concussions

should be taken
SERIOUSLY



Youth Sports Concussion Program
**COACHES INFORMATION
PACKAGE**

for coaches

A concussion is a brain injury that:

- **Is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body**
- **Changes the way your brain normally works**
- **Occurs during practices or games in any sport or recreational activity**
- **Happens even if you haven't been knocked out**
- **Can be serious even if you've just been "dinged" or "had your bell rung." All concussions should be taken seriously. A concussion can affect your ability to do schoolwork and other activities (such as playing video games, working on a computer, studying, driving, or exercising). Most people with a concussion get better, but it is important to give your brain time to heal.**

A bump, blow, or jolt to the head can cause a concussion, a type of injury. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. Even a "ding," "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

During sports and recreation activities, concussions may result from a fall or from players colliding with each other, the ground, or with obstacles, such as a goalpost. The potential for concussions is greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common. Concussions can occur, however, in any organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity, as well as outside of sports from events such as a motor vehicle crash.

Sometimes people do not recognize that a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body can cause a concussion. As a result, athletes may not receive medical attention at the time of the injury, but they may later report symptoms such as a headache, dizziness, or difficulty remembering or concentrating. These symptoms can be a sign of a concussion.



did you know

Athletes who have ever had a concussion are at increased risk for another concussion.

Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults.

A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems.

Recognizing a Possible Concussion

To help recognize a concussion, you should watch for and ask others to report the following two things among your athletes:

1. A forceful bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.

AND

2. Any concussion symptoms or change in the athlete's behavior, thinking, or physical functioning.

Athletes who experience one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body should be kept out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.



- Loss of consciousness
- Feeling "in a fog", "zoned out"
- Vacant stare, "glassy eyed"
- Dizziness or loss of balance
- Slurred/incoherent speech
- Blurry or double vision
- Headache
- Nausea/vomiting
- Confusion/disorientation
- Memory loss
- Overly emotional
- Delayed verbal or motor responses
- Inability to focus
- Sensitivity to light
- Excessive drowsiness

Sports related concussions occur with the greatest frequency in the pediatric and young adult age ranges

Giza Christopher C., et al Sports Health 2011

did you know

Concussions represent an estimated 8.9% of all high school athletic injuries

Gessel LM, et al, J Athl Train 2007

Action Plan If Suspected Athlete Has a Concussion:

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, implement your four-step “Heads Up” action plan:

- ➔ 1. **Remove the athlete from play.** If an athlete experiences a bump or blow to the head or body, look for signs and symptoms of a concussion using the Clipboard Concussion Tool. When in doubt, sit them out.
- ➔ 2. **Contact Parent/Guardian.** If athlete is suspected of a concussion immediately inform their parent or guardian and ensure that they seek medical attention.
- ➔ 3. **Whether or not seen in ER, parents should contact the Youth Sports Concussion Program and their family doctor or nurse practitioner.** They will help decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for that athlete to return to sports.

Is Emergency Medical Care Needed?

WATCH FOR THESE “RED FLAGS”

- **Loss of consciousness >1 minute**
- **Suspected seizure (jerking movements)**
- **Weakness or numbness/tingling**
- **Confusion, agitation, drowsiness**
- **Persistent vomiting**
- **Severe neck pain or neck pain with numbness/tingling**

ANY OF THE ABOVE REQUIRE AN EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSESSMENT

- ➔ 4. **Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.** Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions.

As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:

- **Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body**
- **Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long**
- **Any memory loss immediately following the injury**
- **Any seizures immediately following the injury**
- **Number of previous concussions (if any)**

- ➔ 5. **Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says s/he is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.** A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.

Remember, you can't see a concussion and some athletes may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury. Most people with a concussion will recover quickly and fully. But for some people, signs and symptoms of concussion can last for days, weeks, or longer. Exercising 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 reappear or get worse. After a concussion, physical and cognitive activities—such as concentrating and learning—should be carefully managed and monitored by a health care professional.

It is normal for athletes to feel frustrated, sad, and even angry because they cannot return to sports right away or cannot keep up with their schoolwork. Talk with athletes about these issues and offer support and encouragement.

did you know

The sports with the highest risk of concussion in high school for boys is football and for girls is soccer

There is a significant negative correlation between number of concussions and time in single-leg stance and positive correlations between number of concussions and time in double-leg stance

Marini D, et al, Arch PM&R, 2001

Prevention and Preparation

As a coach, you can play a key role in preventing concussions and responding properly when they occur. Here are some steps you can take throughout the school year to help prevent concussion and ensure the best outcome for your athletes, the team, and the school.

PRESEASON

Ensure Your Athletes are Tested. Make sure that prior to the season you ensure that all of your athletes successfully complete the baseline testing, this will be provided by the Youth Sports Concussion Program free of charge.

CHECK WITH YOUR SCHOOL OR DISTRICT ABOUT CONCUSSION POLICIES.

Concussion policy statements can be developed to include the school's commitment to safety, a brief description of concussion, and information on when athletes can safely return to play (i.e., an athlete should be kept out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says the student is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play). Parents and athletes should sign the concussion policy statement at the beginning of each sports season.

Involve and get support from other school officials—such as principals, certified athletic trainers, other coaches, school nurses, and parent-teacher associations—to help ensure that school rules and concussion policies are in place before the first practice.

Create a concussion action plan. To ensure that concussions are identified early and managed correctly, have an action plan in place before the season starts:

- **Identify a health care professional to respond to injuries during practice or competition.**
- **Keep the Youth Sports Concussion Program Clipboard Sheet with you at all practices and games for concussion signs, symptoms, and emergency contacts readily available.**
- **Be sure that other appropriate athletic and school staff and health care professionals know about the plan and have been trained to use it.**

Learn about concussions. Review the signs and symptoms of concussion and keep Youth Sports Concussion Clipboard Sheet with you at games and practices.

*Visit the Youth Sports Concussion Program website and view the information video at www.yscp.ca
Encourage your athletes to do the same.*



did you know

High school football players who suffered a concussion are 3 times more likely to suffer a repeat concussion in the same season when compared to nonconcussed teammates

Guskiewicz K, et al, Am J Spors Med 2000



Educate athletes, parents, and other coaches about concussion.

Before the first practice, talk to athletes, parents, and other coaches and school officials about the dangers of concussion and potential long-term consequences of concussion, also hand out information packages and have the athletes and their parents sign and return the appropriate paperwork.

Monitor the health of your athletes. Make sure to ask if an athlete has ever had a concussion and insist that your athletes be in good condition to participate. The Youth Sports Concussion Program conducts baseline testing (also known as neurocognitive tests) free of charge to children across the City and County of Peterborough from the age of 10 right through until high school graduation. This baseline test assesses brain function—learning and memory skills, ability to pay attention or concentrate, and how quickly someone can think and solve problems. These tests can be used again during the season if an athlete has a concussion to help identify the effects of the injury. Prior to the first practice, determine whether your athletes have participated in the baseline testing process.

DURING THE SEASON: PRACTICES AND GAMES

Insist that safety comes first. Teach athletes safe playing techniques and encourage them to follow the rules of play. Encourage athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times and make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.

Prevent long-term problems. If one of your athletes has a concussion, her/his brain needs time to heal. Don't let the student return to play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says s/he is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short time period (hours, days, weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term problems.

Teach your athletes it's not smart to play with a concussion. Rest is key after a concussion. Sometimes athletes, parents, and other school officials wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Some athletes may also try to hide their symptoms. Don't let your athlete convince you that s/he is "just fine" or that s/he can "tough it out."

Emphasize to athletes and parents that playing with a concussion is dangerous.

Work closely with other school officials. Be sure that appropriate staff are available for injury assessment and referrals for further medical care. Enlist school nurses and teachers to monitor any changes in the athlete's behavior or schoolwork that could indicate that the student has a concussion. Ask them to report concussions that occurred during the school year. This will help in monitoring injured athletes who participate in multiple sports throughout the school year.

POSTSEASON

Keep track of concussion. Work school staff to review injuries that occurred during the season. Discuss with other staff any needs for better concussion prevention or response preparations.

Review your concussion policy and action plan. Discuss any need for improvements in your concussion policy or action plan with appropriate health care professionals and school staff.

Communicating Effectively about Concussions

It's important to raise awareness about concussion throughout the school community and to educate athletes, parents, and others about how to prevent, recognize, and respond to concussions. Enlist the help of other school staff, including school nurses, and distribute the Youth Sports Concussion Program information sheets, share the website and the video, education and awareness is key to better understanding and prevention.

TALKING TO ATHLETES

Distribute the Youth Sports Concussion Program information sheets, share the website and the video found at www.yscp.ca. Stress that you take the issue seriously and that you expect them to do so as well. Devote a regular team meeting to this topic and invite health care professional to speak to your team. Here are some things you can discuss with your athletes:

- **“Every bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body can potentially cause a concussion.”**
- **“Playing injured does not show courage or strength. Do not play through symptoms of concussion. You can increase your chances of having a repeat concussion and more serious long-term problems.”**
- **“Tell coaching staff right away if you receive a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body and have signs and symptoms of concussion or just don't ‘feel right.’”**
- **“Signs and symptoms of concussion can appear right away or may not be noticed for days or weeks after the injury. Tell your coach if you think you have a concussion or if you think a teammate has one.”**
- **“You can get a concussion even if you are not ‘knocked out.’”**
- **“Concussions can happen during drills, practices, and games. Injuries that happen during practice should be taken just as seriously as those that happen during competition.”**
- **“Tell your coach if you have ever had a concussion.”**
- **“If you think you have a concussion, don't hide it, report it. Take time to recover. It's better to miss one game than the whole season.”**

did you know

Girls are reported to have higher rates of concussion than boys in similar sports

Growing evidence suggests that concussions often can have more long lasting sequelae

Current estimates suggest that 10-14% of concussed athletes do not resolve within an expected time frame

TALKING WITH PARENTS

Send a copy of the concussion policy and action plan to each athlete's family during the preseason, along with the Youth Sports Concussion Program Parent Information Sheet. Parents should sign the concussion policy statement at the beginning of each sports season and be informed that if an athlete has a concussion s/he will be kept out of play until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says the student is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. Here are some things you can discuss with your athletes' parents:



- **“Your child’s safety is our first priority. Every concussion should be taken seriously.”**
- **“Let your child know that it’s not smart to play injured. Don’t let your child convince you that s/he is ‘just fine.’”**
- **“We know you care about your child’s health. That is why it is so important that you talk with her/him about the potential dangers of concussion and to how to prevent it.”**
- **“Learn about and watch for any signs and symptoms of concussion if your child has a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body. Signs and symptoms can appear right away or may not be noticed for days after the injury.”**
- **“Help look for signs of concussion. Carry the list of symptoms and the action plan with you to practices and games.”**
- **“Alert your child’s coach to any known or suspected concussion. To help prevent the possibility of long-term problems, don’t let your child return to play until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says s/he is symptom-free and it’s OK to return to play.”**

did you know

Athletes who have reported 3 or more concussions demonstrate a 5 fold greater prevalence of cognitive impairment and a 3 fold greater prevalence of memory impairment

McKee AC, et al, J Neuropathol Exp Neurol 2009