

Northwest Christian Sports League

Concussion Information Sheet

A concussion is an injury to the brain. It's usually caused by a blow to the head. Most of the time, it doesn't involve a loss of consciousness. They are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, **all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly.** In other words, even a “ding” or a bump on the head can be serious. You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion or if you notice the symptoms or signs of concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away.

What are the signs of a concussion?

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Ringing ears
- Nausea
- Pressure in head
- Neck pain
- Concentration or memory problems
- Repeating the same question/comment
- Vision disturbance
- Loss of balance
- Memory loss (amnesia)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling sluggish
- Drowsiness
- Sadness

Signs observed by teammates, parents and coaches include:

- Vacant facial expression
- Confused about assignment
- Forgets plays
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent
- Moves clumsily or displays lack of coordination
- Answers questions slowly
- Slurred speech
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit
- Can't recall events after hit
- Seizures or convulsions
- Any change in typical behavior or personality
- Loses consciousness
- Appears dazed

How is it diagnosed?

First a doctor examines you. The doctor will also get information from people who were there when the concussion happened. This is very important, especially if you're confused or if you lost your memory of the injury. The doctor will test your strength, sensation, balance, reflexes and memory. In more serious cases, your doctor will want to get special x-rays of your head, called Computed Tomography (CT or CAT) Scans or Magnetic Resonance Images (MRI).

Does medicine help?

The treatment for concussion is rest. If you have a headache, you can usually take acetaminophen (brand name: Tylenol). Always ask your doctor before you take any medicine if you've had a concussion.

What should I watch out for?

- Stiff neck
- Severe headache
- Repeated vomiting
- Confusion that gets worse
- Difficulty walking, speaking or using your arms
- Convulsions
- Unusual sleepiness

When can I return to sports?

You should never return to play while you have any signs of concussion, like headache or dizziness. If your concussion was very mild, you may be allowed to return to play after 15 or 20 minutes. If you had memory loss or loss of consciousness, you may not be able to return to play for one to two weeks. After a severe concussion, you may not be able to return to play for a month. If this wasn't your first concussion, your return to play may take even longer.

What are the risks of returning to play too early?

A player returning too early could suffer from "second impact syndrome," which may be fatal. This problem is caused by a loss of the automatic control of blood vessels to the brain. Never return to a sports activity until you are cleared by a doctor.

Are there any lasting effects to a concussion?

Most people get better after a concussion without any permanent damage. People have signs of concussion for weeks to months. Repeated concussions could cause permanent damage. After several concussions, your doctor may talk with you about changing sports.