

5 Ways to Help Prevent Concussion in Athletes

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that alters the way your brain functions. Effects are usually temporary but can include headaches and problems with concentration, memory, balance and coordination.

– Mayo Clinic



1. Use the proper headgear properly

Wear a helmet appropriate for the sport. Make certain that it is the correct size and that it fits properly. But don't think you can avoid concussions just because you're wearing headgear. Helmets provide critical protection but no helmet can fully prevent concussions.

2. Don't use your head

Practice "heads up" football and never lower your head during a hit². Use your shoulder to hit an opponent instead. Most sports leagues have rules that help to prevent concussions so be certain to follow the rules and practice good sportsmanship.

Football Helmet Fitting Guide¹:

1. Front of helmet should be approx. 1 inch above player's eyebrows.
2. Jaw pads should feel firm against the face.
3. Skin of the forehead should move with the front pad – there should be no room for twisting.
4. Cup on chin straps should be centered and snug over chin.
5. Interlock hands on top of helmet and press down – player should feel pressure on crown of head.

Research Update

The NCAA and U.S. Department of Defense have launched a three-year, \$30 million project to track the effects of concussions in student athletes. The goal of the study is to provide the NCAA with much-needed scientific evidence about concussions.

3. Know the symptoms of concussions

Serious head trauma doesn't always result in a loss of consciousness. Symptoms of a concussion can be subtle and may not appear immediately.

Symptoms of concussion could include:

- Headache or “pressure” in the head
- Temporary loss of consciousness
- Confusion
- Amnesia
- Dizziness
- Ringing in the ears
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Fatigue
- Delayed response to questions
- Appearing dazed



Children and teens are more likely to suffer a concussion and they take longer to recover than adults.

Athletes who have had a concussion are at a higher risk for another one.

Concussions are most often caused by a blow to the head but can also be caused by a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth.

4. Take concussions seriously

Too often, head trauma is not taken seriously and athletes keep playing, despite the risk for brain injury. Any head injury should be considered serious and treated immediately. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents call the child's doctor if the child receives anything more than a light bump on the head. Regardless of age, seek emergency care if the athlete shows any of the symptoms described.

5. Don't play until it's safe

An athlete should never return to play after a concussion until he or she is cleared by a medical professional. A concussion incurred before the brain has recovered from the first can cause long term damage and even death.

Citations

¹Riddell, [Helmet Fitting Guide](#)

²Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [“Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports”. A Fact Sheet for Coaches.](#)

This document should be considered informational only, and is not to be considered as medical advice. Consult your doctor for medical advice and decisions.