

A FACT SHEET FOR Sports Officials



The information in this fact sheet can help you protect athletes from concussions or other serious brain injuries and know what to do if an athlete might have a concussion.

Understand concussion

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. This fast movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging the brain cells.

Help keep athletes safe

As a sports official, you help set the tone for safe play and can help lower an athlete's chances of getting a concussion or other serious injury. When athletes are overly aggressive or make illegal actions, they can increase the risk for concussion for themselves and other athletes. Here are some ways you can keep athletes safe:

- Enforce the rules for fair play, safety, and good sporting behavior.
- Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of concussions so you can be confident about when an athlete should be removed from a game or competition.
- Stop play whenever there is a concern for the safety of athletes, and remove an athlete from a game or competition if you observe concussion signs or if the athlete reports concussion symptoms.
- Penalize athletes for unsafe actions, such as:
 - Using their head or helmet to contact another athlete.
 - Making illegal contacts or checking, tackling, or colliding with an unprotected athlete.
 - Trying to injure or put another athlete at risk for injury.
- Use correct terminology, such as concussion and brain injury. Avoid words, such as *bell ringers* and *dings* to describe a concussion because these can make light of a serious problem.
- Use pre-season and pre-game meetings to remind coaches to promote a culture of concussion safety with athletes.

Take action for a possible concussion

If you suspect that an athlete might be experiencing concussion symptoms, pull them from play. **When in doubt, get them out.**



An athlete who is allowed to continue playing with a concussion, or who is returned to play too soon, is at risk for a repeat brain injury. This can lead to a longer recovery and poorer health outcomes.

Stay up to date on concussion policies and information

- Review your state, league, and organization's concussion policies. Be aware that concussion policies may vary by location and sport. Most policies state that an athlete cannot return to a game or competition on the same day the possible concussion occurred and cannot return before being cleared by a healthcare provider.
- Take a training course on concussion. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers free concussion training for sports officials at www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP.
- Talk with other sports officials to share strategies that enforce safe and fair play.

GOOD SPORTING BEHAVIOR
MODEL IT. EXPECT IT. ENFORCE IT.



ENFORCE SAFE PLAY. SPORTS OFFICIALS SET THE TONE FOR SAFETY.

Spot a possible concussion

Athletes with one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body may have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

Concussion signs that sports officials, parents, or coaches might observe in athletes:

- Appearing confused, dazed, or stunned
- Looking unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moving clumsily (appearing off-balance or dizzy)
- Being slow to answer questions
- Being unable to remember events before or after the hit, bump, or fall
- Losing consciousness (only occurs in about 10-15% of concussions)
- Showing behavior or personality changes

Concussion symptoms that athletes might feel and report:

- Having a headache
- Feeling nauseated or vomiting
- Experiencing balance problems or dizziness
- Seeing double or having fuzzy vision
- Feeling sensitive to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish
- Feeling mentally foggy
- Having difficulty concentrating or remembering plays
- Being confused about what play it is or what part of the game it is

Signs of a more serious brain injury

Have someone call 9-1-1 if an athlete develops one or more of these danger signs after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body:

- Drowsiness or inability to wake up or inability to stay awake
- Repeated vomiting
- Convulsions or seizures (seizures can include violent, uncontrollable shaking or twitching)
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- One pupil larger than the other
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away

The information provided in this fact sheet or through links to other sites is not a substitute for medical or professional care. Questions about diagnosis and treatment for concussion should be directed to a physician or other healthcare provider.

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To learn more,
go to cdc.gov/HEADSUP

