

# A FACT SHEET FOR Youth Sports Officials



Below is information to help youth sports officials (also known as referees and umpires) protect athletes from concussion or other serious brain injury, and to help sports officials know what to do if a concussion occurs.

## 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 youth 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. Aggressive or unsportsmanlike behavior among athletes can increase their chances of getting a concussion. Here are some ways you can keep athletes safe.

### Create a culture of safety at a game or competition:

- Enforce the rules for fair play, safety, and sportsmanship.
- Penalize athletes for unsafe actions, such as:
  - Striking another athlete in the head;
  - Using their head or helmet to contact another athlete;
  - Making illegal contacts or checking, tackling, or colliding with an unprotected opponent; and
  - Trying to injure or put another athlete at risk for injury.
- Remind coaches at the pre-game meeting to talk with their athletes about concussion, and tell athletes that it is their job to report a concussion or other injury right away.

### Multiple concussions

**Athletes who have had a concussion have a higher chance of getting another concussion. A repeat concussion can lead to more severe symptoms and a longer recovery.**

### Stay up to date on concussion information:

- Review your state, league, and organization's concussion guidelines.
- Take a training course on concussion. The Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) offers free concussion training at [www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP](http://www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP).
- Download CDC's HEADS UP app or another resource that provides a list of concussion signs and symptoms.
- Talk with other sports officials to share strategies that enforce safe and fair play.

### Check out the sports facility and equipment:

- Make sure the sports facility provides a safe playing environment. Work with the game or event manager to fix any concerns, such as tripping hazards or goal posts without proper padding.
- Make sure all athletes who wear helmets use one that fits well and is in good condition.

**SPORTSMANSHIP:  
MODEL IT. EXPECT IT. ENFORCE IT.**



# ENFORCE SAFE PLAY. YOU 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.

### Signs sports officials, parents, or coaches may observe:

- Seems confused
- Forgets an instruction or is unsure of the game, position, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly or repeats questions
- Can't remember events before or after the hit, bump, or fall
- Loses consciousness (even for a moment)
- Has behavior or personality changes

### Symptoms athletes may report:

- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or balance problems
- Bothered by light or noise
- Feeling foggy or groggy
- Trouble concentrating or problems with short- or long-term memory
- Does not "feel right"

*The information provided in this fact sheet or through linkages 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.*



### Watch out for possible concussions:

- You can use injury timeouts to make sure an athlete with a possible concussion is removed from play. When in doubt, sit them out!
- An athlete with a possible concussion *cannot return to play on the same day of the injury* and until cleared by a healthcare provider.

## Signs of a more serious brain injury

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:

- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Significant nausea or repeated vomiting
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching)
- Loss of consciousness (passing out)

Athletes who continue to play while having concussion symptoms have a greater chance of getting another concussion. Athletes who get another concussion before the previous one has healed can increase the chance for long-term problems. It can even be fatal.

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To learn more,  
go to [cdc.gov/HEADSUP](https://www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP)

