

Concussion in sports

What you need to know about head injuries

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What is a concussion?

A concussion is a temporary disturbance in brain function caused by a direct blow to the head or by a jarring whiplash-type force that causes the brain to move quickly back and forth. These injuries cause a variety of symptoms, ranging from confusion and headache to loss of consciousness and permanent dysfunction. In order to increase the awareness of the serious nature of concussions, we should use the terms "concussion" and "mild traumatic brain injury" (MTBI) when referring to the injury, instead of the old terms "dinged" or "got his bell rung."

How serious is the problem?

It is estimated that people have about 1.6 to 3.5 million concussions each year in the country. In 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that there were 2.5 million ER or doctor visits related to MTBI. Of these, there were 50,000 deaths reported from traumatic brain injury. It is estimated that 250,000 trips to the ER were due to sports-related concussions in athletes under age 19.

What can we do?

The first step to decreasing the impact of concussions on our athletes is recognition and awareness. A good place to look is cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/index.html. This CDC site educates the public about MTBI, especially in sports. In soccer, the most common ways to receive a mild traumatic brain injury are head-to-head and head-to-turf hits. Please be aware and watch the athlete afterward. The immediate signs and symptoms of concussion include the

hallmark of "confusion," which is dizziness, feeling dazed or foggy; loss of memory; visual change; ringing in the ears; headache; nausea and emotional changes.

One of the worst things that an athlete can do is to continue to play after an MTBI, from the risk of being hit again, to the brain energy that it takes to participate, and to being "lost" on the field posing a safety threat to self, teammates and opponents.

Once evaluated, follow the mantra of the CDC, "when in doubt, sit them out." Do not worry or feel bad about removing someone from a practice or game. Even as trained professionals, have we held someone out who in the end was OK? Sure. We would rather err on the side of safety because we do our best to protect them and have them play in a safe environment. If these symptoms persist, or if there are other concerns, please consider consulting your primary care physician or visiting an ER as soon as possible.

Download our mobile app or visit NovantHealthUVA.org to view ER wait times and check in online.

Take 10 minutes and watch this video, [youtube.com/watch?v=f0xJT53SZqQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0xJT53SZqQ). You will see a graphic example of why all concussions are serious and the need to protect our children.

For more information please call **1-855-MD-SPORT (63-77678)** or visit NovantHealthUVA.org.

