



A Fact Sheet for Parents



What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. Even what seems to be a mild bump to the head can be serious.

Concussions can have a more serious effect on a young, developing brain and need to be addressed correctly.

What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after an injury or may not appear or be noticed until hours or days after the injury. It is important to watch for changes in how your child or teen is acting or feeling, if symptoms are getting worse, or if your child just "doesn't feel right." Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.

If your child or teen reports **one or more** of the symptoms of concussion listed below, or if you notice the signs yourself, seek medical attention right away. Children and teens are among those at greatest risk for concussion.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION

Signs observed by parents or guardians

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about events
- Answers questions slowly
- Repeats questions
- Can't recall events *prior* to the hit, bump, or fall
- Can't recall events *after* the hit, bump, or fall
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Forgets class schedule or assignments

Symptoms reported by your child or teen



THINKING/REMEMBERING:

- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Feeling more slowed down than usual
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy



SLEEP*:

- Feels drowsy
- Sleeps *less* than usual
- Sleeps *more* than usual
- Has trouble falling asleep

**Ask about sleep symptoms only if the injury occurred on a prior day.*



PHYSICAL:

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Fatigue or feeling tired
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Numbness or tingling
- Does not "feel right"



EMOTIONAL:

- Irritable
- Sad
- More emotional than usual
- Nervous



DANGER SIGNS

Be alert for symptoms that worsen over time. Your child or teen should be seen in an emergency department right away if she or he has one or more of these danger signs:

- One pupil (the black part in the middle of the eye) larger than the other
- Drowsiness or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Difficulty recognizing people or places
- Increasing confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Unusual behavior
- Loss of consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

Children and teens with a concussion should NEVER return to sports or recreation activities on the same day the injury occurred.

They should delay returning to their activities until a healthcare professional experienced in evaluating for concussion says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. This means, until permitted, not returning to:

- Physical education class,
- Sports practices or games, or
- Physical activity at recess.

What should I do if my child or teen has a concussion?

1. Seek medical attention right away.

A healthcare professional experienced in evaluating for concussion can determine how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child or teen to return to normal activities, including physical activity and school (concentration and learning activities).

2. Help your child take time to get better.

Your child should take it easy the first few days after the injury, when symptoms are more severe. As your child starts to feel better (and within a few days after the injury), he or she can gradually return to regular (non-strenuous) activities. If your child's symptoms do not worsen during an activity, then this activity is OK for him or her. If symptoms worsen, your child should cut back on how much he or she can do that activity without experiencing symptoms. Ask your child's doctor for written instruction to help with recovery, and let the doctor know if concussion symptoms do not go away or if they get worse after your child returns to regular activities.

3. Offer support.

Be sure to offer support during your child's recovery, and allow him or her to stay connected with friends and others.

How can I help my child return to school safely after a concussion?

Most children can return to school within a few days. Help your child or teen get needed support when returning to school after a concussion. Talk with your child's teachers, school nurse, coach, speech-language pathologist, or counselor about your child's concussion and symptoms. Your child may feel frustrated, sad, and even angry because she or he cannot return to recreation and sports right away, or cannot keep up with schoolwork. Your child may also feel isolated from peers and social networks. Talk often with your child about these issues and offer your support and encouragement. As your child's symptoms decrease, the extra help or support can be removed gradually. Children and teens who return to school after a concussion may need to:

- Take rest breaks as needed;
- Spend fewer hours at school;
- Be given more time to take tests or complete assignments;
- Receive help with schoolwork; and/or
- Reduce time spent reading, writing, or on the computer.

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

