

# HEADS UP CONCUSSION IN HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION



## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Athletes who experience **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.

Signs Observed by Coaching Staff	Symptoms Reported by Athlete
Appears dazed or stunned	Headache or "pressure" in head
Is confused about assignment or position	Nausea or vomiting
Forgets an instruction	Balance problems or dizziness
Is unsure of game, score, or opponent	Double or blurry vision
Moves clumsily	Sensitivity to light
Answers questions slowly	Sensitivity to noise
Loses consciousness ( <i>even briefly</i> )	Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes	Concentration or memory problems
Can't recall events prior to hit or fall	Confusion
Can't recall events after hit or fall	Just not "feeling right" or is "feeling down"

**It's better to miss one game than the whole season.**

For more information and to order additional materials *free-of-charge*, visit:  
[www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion).

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## ACTION PLAN

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, you should take the following four steps:

1. Remove the athlete from play.
2. Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion. Do not try to judge the seriousness of the injury yourself.
3. Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion.
4. Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says the athlete is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

### Emergency Medical Services

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Health Care Professional

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### School Staff Available During Practices

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### School Staff Available During Games

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

## What Should I do If a Concussion Occurs?

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, implement your 4-step action plan:

1. **Remove the athlete from play.** Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, keep the athlete out of play.
2. **Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.** Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:
  - Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body
  - Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
  - Any memory loss immediately following the injury
  - Any seizures immediately following the injury
  - Number of previous concussions (*if any*)
3. **Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion.** Make sure they know that the athlete should be seen by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.
4. **Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.** A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.



## What Can I Do to Prevent Concussions?

### Preseason

**Educate athletes and other parents or coaches about concussion.** Before the first practice, talk to athletes and parents about the dangers of concussion and potential long-term consequences of concussion. Explain your concerns about concussion and your expectations of safe play. Pass out the concussion fact sheets for athletes and for parents at the beginning of the season and again if a concussion occurs. Remind athletes to tell coaching staff right away if they suspect they have a concussion or that a teammate has a concussion.

**Monitor the health of your athletes.** Make sure to ask parents if an athlete has ever had a concussion

### During the Season: Practices and Games

**Insist that safety comes first.**

- Teach and practice safe playing techniques.
- Encourage athletes to follow the rules of play and to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure athletes wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.

**Teach athletes it's not smart to play with a concussion.** Rest is key after a concussion. Sometimes athletes, parents, and other school or league officials wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Don't let your athlete convince you that they're "just fine."