

Concussion – Information for Parents

Concussion can affect anybody, including athletes at all levels of sport from junior participants to recreational athletes and elite and/or professional athletes.

What is Concussion?

Concussion is a brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. Concussion is caused by a knock to the head, or anywhere on the body where the force is transmitted to the head. A person can be concussed with or without loss of consciousness. All concussions are serious.

Signs and Symptoms of Concussion

Signs and symptoms of concussion vary, may be difficult to detect, and can occur immediately or develop over the hours or days following the injury.

Critical symptoms/signs	Obvious symptoms/signs	Subtle symptoms/signs
Neck pain	Loss of consciousness	Nausea or vomiting
Increasing confusion, agitation or irritability	No protection action in a fall to the ground	Headache or feeling of pressure in the head
Repeated vomiting	Jerky movements/seizure after a knock	Feeling slowed down or in a fog
Seizure or convulsion	Confusion, disorientation	Blurred vision
Weakness or tingling/burning in the arms or legs	Unsteady on feet or balance problems	Sensitivity to light and/or noise
Deteriorating conscious state	Memory impairment	Dizziness
Severe or increasing headache	Dazed or looking blank/vacant	Difficulty concentrating or remembering
Unusual behavioural change	Slurred speech	Drowsiness
Double vision	Cannot recognise people or places	More emotional
One pupil larger than the other		Confusion Trouble falling asleep

What should you do if you think your child has a concussion?

- **Seek medical attention straight away.** A health professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to regular activities, including sports.
- **Keep your child out of play.** Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play the day of the injury and until a health professional says it's okay. Children who return to play while the brain is still healing risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Repeat or later concussions can be very serious and could cause permanent brain damage.
- **Allow time for physical and mental rest.** This allows the brain time to recover. To properly rest the child may need time off from school or other sport or extra-curricular activities. Mental rest may include refraining from playing computer games, reading and watching television.
- **Tell your child's coach about any previous concussions.** Coaches should know if your child has had a previous concussion. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell them.

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

There is growing concern in Australia and internationally about the incidence of sport-related concussion and its potential health ramifications.

If managed appropriately, most symptoms and signs of concussion resolve quickly. However, complications can occur, including prolonged symptoms and increased chance of further injury.

Children who are returning to activity, sports and school after a concussion may need to:

- Take rest breaks as needed
- Spend fewer hours at the activity
- Be given more time to complete tasks
- Receive additional coaching or assistance
- Reduce time spent reading, writing or on screens

Talk with your child's coach/teacher or activity coordinator about your child's concussion and symptoms. As your child's symptoms decrease, the extra help or support can be removed.

More information

More information on concussion in sport is available through Sports Medicine Australia:

www.sma.org.au/resources-advice/concussion/

