

# A Healthier You

## Preventing Concussion



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

### Let's Take Brain Injuries Out of Play

It's great to have fun and play around with others in casual or organized sports. However, it's also a great idea to play it safe by preventing head injuries, and recognizing the signs of concussion.

#### What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works. Concussions are caused by a bump or blow to the head. Even a "ding," or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

#### What can cause a concussion?

Concussions can occur in any casual or organized sport or recreational activity, however the risk is greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common.

Some common recreational activities that can result in bumps to the head are:

- ✓ Riding a bike, motorcycle, scooter or ATV
- ✓ Playing a contact sport such as football, soccer, or boxing
- ✓ Using in-line skates or riding a skateboard
- ✓ Batting and running bases in baseball or softball
- ✓ Riding a horse
- ✓ Skiing or snowboarding



You can't see a concussion. A concussion can happen even if you are not knocked unconscious. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or many not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. So if you notice symptoms after an injury, seek medical attention right away!

#### What are some symptoms?

Concussion symptoms differ with each person and with each injury. Common symptoms can include:

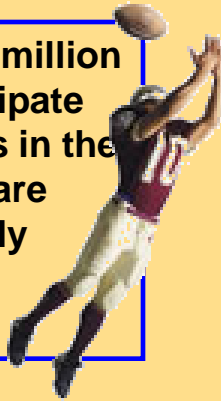
- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Nausea or vomiting
- ✓ Confusion
- ✓ Bothered by light or noise
- ✓ Double or blurry vision
- ✓ Difficulty remembering or paying attention
- ✓ Balance problems
- ✓ Slowed reaction or dizziness
- ✓ Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- ✓ Sleep problems or Loss of consciousness
- ✓ Feeling irritable, more emotional, or "down"



For concussion in a child, parents should also look to see if they move clumsily, forget an instruction or answer questions slowly. A child with a concussion may even show behavior or personality changes, or can't remember events from before or after the injury. In any of these cases, see a health care professional immediately.



Among the more than 38 million boys and girls that participate in organized youth sports in the U.S. today, concussions are one of the most commonly reported injuries.



## What if a blow to the head does occur?

If a head impact does occur, being prepared to respond is as easy as knowing your concussion ABCs:

- A – Assess the Situation
- B – Be alert for signs and symptoms
- C – Contact a health care professional

Concussions don't only happen to athletes on the playing field.

It is easy for anyone – especially youth – to take a spill, knock his/her head, and get a concussion in any number of settings ranging from the school hallway, the playground, in the cafeteria and beyond.

## How can concussion be prevented?

Attention to safety, including the use of appropriate athletic gear, such as bike helmets and seat belts, reduces the risk of head injury. Here's some prevention suggestions:

- ✓ Follow your coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport
- ✓ Practice good sportsmanship at all times
- ✓ Wear the right protective equipment for your activity (helmets, padding, skin guards, and eye and mouth guards)
- ✓ Make sure your protective equipment fits properly, is well maintained and worn correctly
- ✓ Use hand signals or "high fives" rather than "head-butts" or horseplay

For individual and leisure sports, concussions are more likely during bicycling, playground games and snow skiing.



## Do you want to learn more?

You and your kids can take a "sports safety pledge" and find other valuable information on sports safety at [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org). Another great source for information is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov/concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion) or you can contact your local health department.

