



WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

When your child participates in sports activities, bumps and bruises are inevitable, but when those blows affect a child's head, it is important to watch for a possible concussion. Traumatic brain injuries (TBI), such as concussions, are any blow to the head that disrupts normal brain function. When allowed to heal properly, concussions are generally not serious, and the child

can usually return to playing sports. If the brain is not allowed proper time to heal and the child suffers subsequent injury, he or she may suffer permanent brain damage, coma, or even death. TBI is the leading cause of death from sports-related injuries. It is critical to pay attention if your child experiences a hit or jolt to the head during practice or play.



SCHNECK

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Prevention: Insistence on a “safety first” policy by coaches and parents can help reduce the risk of brain injuries. Always make sure that athletes follow any rules and safety guidelines set by the sport or by their coaches, and encourage good sportsmanship. Also, make sure that children wear any appropriate safety gear, which should be properly maintained and fit the child well. Helmets are encouraged for many sports to reduce the chance of brain injury. No helmet is guaranteed to prevent a concussion, so it is important to avoid blows to the head.

Recognition: A bump or hit to the head does not automatically constitute a concussion, so it is important to pay attention to your athlete’s behavior after he or she suffers a blow.



Warning signs that you or a coach may notice in the player include:

- + Appears dazed, stunned, or confused
- + Seems clumsy
- + Answers questions slowly
- + Experiences loss of consciousness
- + Forgets what to do
- + Seems unsure about what is happening around him or her

Signs that the athlete may notice include:

- + Having a headache or pressure in the head
- + Changes in vision or sensitivity to light or sound
- + Nausea or vomiting
- + Feeling lethargic, dazed, or confused
- + Having problems concentrating

Call 911 if you notice any of the following signs in an individual who suffered a blow to the head:

- + One pupil is larger than the other
- + Is sleepy or cannot be awakened
- + Has a headache or other symptom that gets worse
- + Slurred speech
- + Convulsions or seizure
- + Cannot recognize people or places
- + Repeated vomiting or nausea
- + Loss of consciousness

Response: If you think your child may have a concussion, seek immediate medical help. A healthcare practitioner can examine your child to determine how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for him or her to resume activities such as sports. Athletes are often celebrated for or even encouraged to “tough it out” and keep playing; however, if your child has experienced a concussion, he or she should not return to play until the brain is fully healed, to avoid possible reinjury and potential brain damage or even death. Return to play should be gradual, and parents, coaches, and the athlete should all watch out for any return or worsening of symptoms.