



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO CONCUSSION CARE

FACTS:

- A concussion is a traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- All concussions are serious
- Concussions can occur without loss of consciousness or memory
- Recognition and proper management of concussions when they first occur can prevent further injury or even death
- Most athletes can safely return to play after recovery
- Everyone recovers at their own rate
- In general, the younger the athlete is, the longer the recovery
- Both cognitive and physical rest are the key to recovery
- U.S. annual rate of sports/recreation related concussions: 3.8 million

A concussion is caused by a bump or blow (usually to the head) that is hard enough to disrupt the metabolic functioning of the brain.

It is important for athletes to report concussions because the cumulative effects of repeated concussions can result in permanent intellectual and cognitive changes.

Youth athletes are more vulnerable to the effects of concussion, and their amount of time needed to recover is often longer than full-grown adults.

Rest is the best treatment after a concussion as it helps the brain heal faster. If the athlete is still symptomatic, forcing him or her to exert either physically or mentally will likely lengthen the recovery period.

This means abstaining from sports, as well as any other activities that require sustained mental exertion, from test-taking to playing video games.

Once an athlete is 100% symptom free at rest, a gradual return-to-play protocol should be implemented to be sure that symptoms do not resurface with exertion. No athlete should ever return to play if concussion symptoms recur.

Management of concussion in youth is very important to prevent a rare but often fatal brain injury called Second Impact Syndrome. This syndrome may occur when an athlete suffers even a mild concussion and then, within a short period of time, receives a second blow to the head before he or she has fully recovered. Rapid brain swelling can occur as the brain has not yet healed from the first hit. Increased intracranial pressure, if uncontrolled, can lead to death or severe neurological damage.

WHAT SHOULD I BE LOOKING FOR?

To recognize a possible concussion, parents should watch for any change in their child's behavior, thinking and/or physical functioning associated with a collision, fall or forceful movement of the head.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Signs Observed by Families:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused following instructions
- More irritable or emotional than usual
- Sleeping more than usual
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Trouble reading or completing homework
- Can't recall events before or after hit or fall
- Complains of noises, lights or sunlight

Symptoms Reported by Athletes:

- Headache or pressure in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitive to lights or noises
- Dizziness, clumsiness, sleepiness
- Feels sluggish, hazy, foggy, groggy
- Attention or concentration problems
- Confusion or memory loss
- Just doesn't feel right



CONCUSSION INSTITUTE

Gwinnett Medical Center – Duluth

WHEN SHOULD I CALL A DOCTOR OR VISIT THE ER?

Call your doctor or go to the Emergency Department with sudden onset of any of the following:

- Headaches that worsen
- Seizures
- Neck Pain
- Slurred speech
- Look very drowsy, can't be awakened
- Can't recognize people or places
- Loss of consciousness
- Repeated vomiting
- Weakness or numbness in arms or legs
- Unusual behavior change
- Significant irritability
- Increasing confusion

OK	NOT NECESSARY	NOT OK
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use Tylenol for headaches• Use ice packs as needed for comfort• Eat a light diet• Go to sleep• Rest (no strenuous activity or sports)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Check eyes with a flashlight• Wake up every hour• Test reflexes• Stay in bed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Drink alcohol or drive while symptomatic• Exercise or lift weights• Take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), aspirin, naproxen or non-steroid anti-inflammatory medications until told it's okay by a physician

- **Following a concussion, rest is the key.** The child/adolescent should not participate in any sports, PE, recess, bike riding or other physical activities that increase normal heart rate. Limit activities that require a lot of lengthy mental activity or concentration (such as homework, jobs and video games), as this can make the symptoms worse. Get good sleep, and take naps if tired of drowsy.
- **Ensure that your child is evaluated right away by an appropriate healthcare professional.** Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. The experts at the Concussion Institute at GMC-Duluth have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions and to develop an appropriate care plan. They will work with a student's teachers, coaches and other providers to return your child to the classroom and playing field as quickly and as safely as possible.
- **Inform the school team—teachers, administrators, counselors, etc.—about your child's injury and symptoms.** Students who experience concussion symptoms often need extra help to perform schoolwork and may not perform their best on tests. Rest breaks during the school day can be helpful. As symptoms decrease during recovery, the extra supports can be removed slowly. Concussion Institute staff will work with your child's school to manage the workload and schedule as your child recovers.
- **Be patient!** It is normal for a child or adolescent to feel frustrated, sad and even angry because they cannot return to sports and recreation right away. With any injury, a full recovery will lower the chances of getting hurt again. It is better to miss one or two games than the whole season. Careful post-injury management will ensure the quickest and safest return to sports, and to the classroom.
- **Allow your child to return to play only with permission from a healthcare professional with experience in evaluating concussions.** Recovery times vary across individuals, so you should be wary when permission is based on the amount of time spent "resting," rather than measures of current symptoms and neurocognitive status. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. Prevent common long-term problems and the rare Second Impact Syndrome by seeking appropriate medical evaluation and approval for return to play.
- **Be sure that your child follows a gradual return-to-play protocol** under the supervision of a healthcare provider with expertise in concussion management.

ABOUT THE CONCUSSION INSTITUTE

We opened the Concussion Institute at GMC—Duluth because concussions are an all too common occurrence among athletes—especially our student-athletes. We also realized there was not another facility like it in Georgia or the Southeast.

Concussions may be common, but they don't need to be game-changers. With the latest methods, we are committed to improving concussion treatment for athletes of all ages and levels of play—from youth leagues to the collegiate and professional ranks. We're doing this by increasing awareness of the signs and symptoms of concussions and other head trauma, as well as providing state-of-the-art diagnostic and treatment approaches.



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