



Create a safe sport culture

Young athletes deserve to play sports in a culture that celebrates their hard work, dedication, and teamwork, and in programs that seek to create a safe environment—especially when it comes to concussion.

As a youth sports coach or parent, your actions can create a safe sport culture and can lower an athlete's chance of getting a concussion or other serious injury.

Athletes thrive when they:

- Have fun playing their sport.
- Receive positive messages and praise from their coaches for concussion symptom reporting.
- Have parents who talk with them about concussion and model and expect safe play.
- Get written instructions from a health care provider on when to return to school and play.
- Support their teammates sitting out of play if they have concussion.
- Feel comfortable reporting symptoms of a possible concussion to coaches.¹

Enforce the Rules

Enforce the rules of the sport for fair play, safety, and sportsmanship. Ensure athletes avoid unsafe actions such as:

- Striking another athlete in the head;
- Using their head or helmet to contact another athlete;
- Making illegal contacts or checking, tackling, or colliding with an unprotected opponent; and/or
- Trying to injure or put another athlete at risk for injury.

Tell athletes you expect good sportsmanship at all times, both on and off the playing field.

Talk about Concussion Reporting

Talk with athletes about the importance of reporting a concussion.

Some athletes may not report a concussion because they don't think a concussion is serious. They may also worry about:

- Losing their position on the team or during the game.
- Jeopardizing their future sports career.
- Looking weak.
- Letting their teammates down.
- What their coach or teammates might think of them.^{2,3,4}

As many as 7 out of 10 young athletes with a possible concussion report playing with concussion symptoms.



Get a Concussion Action Plan in Place...

Create an action plan that includes information on how to teach athletes ways to lower their chances of getting a concussion. If you think an athlete may have a concussion, you should:

1. Remove the athlete from play.
2. Keep an athlete with a possible concussion out of play on the same day of the injury and until cleared by a health care provider. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a health care provider should assess an athlete for a possible concussion.
3. Record and share information about the injury, such as how it happened and the athlete's symptoms, to help a health care provider assess the athlete.

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4. Inform the athlete's parent(s) or guardian(s) about the possible concussion and refer them to CDC's website for concussion information.
5. Ask for written instructions from the athlete's health care provider about the steps you should take to help the athlete safely return to play. Before returning to play an athlete should:
 - Be back to doing their regular school activities.
 - Not have any symptoms from the injury when doing normal activities.
 - Have the green-light from their health care provider to begin the return to play process.

...And Why This Is Important

Athletes May Try to Hide Concussion Symptoms

- As many as 7 in 10 young athletes with a possible concussion report playing with concussion symptoms.⁵
- Out of those, 4 in 10 said their coaches were unaware that they had a possible concussion.⁵
- As many as 25% of the concussions reported among high school athletes result from aggressive or illegal play.⁶

Young Athletes Are More Likely to Play With a Concussion During a Big Game

In almost all sports, concussion rates are higher during competitions than in practice.⁷

- Athletes may be less likely to tell their coach or athletic trainer about a possible concussion during a championship game or other important event.⁸

Most Sports-Related Concussions Are Caused by Player-to-Player Contact

- Over two-thirds (70%) of concussions among young athletes result from contact with another athlete.⁷
- This is followed by player-to-surface contact (17%), such as hitting the ground or other obstacle.⁷

Headache Is Most Commonly Reported Concussion Symptom

Almost all (94%) high school athletes with a concussion reported having a headache.⁷

- Other commonly reported symptoms include:⁷
 - Dizziness (76%)
 - Trouble concentrating (55%)
 - Confusion (45%)
 - Bothered by light (36%)
 - Nausea (31%)

References

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