

Concussions

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury that cannot be seen on an X-ray or CT scan. It affects the way your child thinks and remembers things. It can cause a variety of symptoms.

What causes a concussion?

In a concussion, the brain hits the inside of the skull, injuring the brain. A concussion can be caused by a blow (hit) to the head, face or neck, or sometimes the body.



How long will it take for my child to get better?

The signs and symptoms of a concussion often last for 7-10 days, but may last much longer. Sometimes, children may take many weeks or months to heal. Your child may take longer to heal if she has had a concussion before.

How do I know if my child has had a concussion?

Your child does not need to be 'knocked out' (lose consciousness) to have had a concussion. After a concussion, your child or teen may have a number of these problems.

Thinking Problems

Your child may:

- Not know where she is or the time, date, or period of the game.
- Not remember what happened before or after getting hit.
- Be confused.
- Have been knocked out.

Your child may complain of:

- A headache
- Dizziness
- Feeling 'dazed'
- Feeling 'dinged', 'stunned' or 'having my bell rung'
- Seeing stars or flashing lights
- Seeing double or blurred vision
- Ringing in the ears
- Feeling sleepy
- Stomach pain or nausea

Other Problems

Your child may:

- Have poor coordination or balance
- Have a blank stare or seem 'glassy eyed'
- Throw up
- Have slurred speech
- Be slow to answer questions
- Not play as usual
- Have trouble concentrating
- Be easily distracted
- Show strange or inappropriate emotions (laughing, crying or getting mad too easily)

How is a concussion treated?

Rest is the best treatment, because it allows the brain to heal itself. Going back to activities before your child is completely better can cause symptoms to come back and stay longer.



Step 1: Rest

- Your child or teen should not go to school or take part in any activities that make him feel worse (no bike riding, soccer, play wrestling, computer or video games)
- Move on to Step 2, once your child or teen is completely better at rest (only when she is no longer bothered by headache, dizziness or other symptoms)
- If your child or teen is still having symptoms due to concussion, the most important treatment is rest.

Step 2: Gradually return to school and usual activities

Regular activities can be gradually introduced. Your child can:

- Start back to school, half days at first, then full time if she feels OK.
- If any of the symptoms like headache, dizziness, or trouble concentrating come back, go back to Step 1.
- Once your child feels completely better, have the doctor check your child again. If the doctor agrees, your child can slowly begin to increase physical activity (see Step 3).

Step 3: Increase physical activity in small steps

Make sure your child has been checked by a doctor before going through these steps. Each of the following steps should take at least one day. Do not allow your child to go any faster.

- Light exercise (walking or riding a stationary bike for 10-15 minutes).
- Sport specific activity, (like skating for hockey or running for soccer) for 20-30 minutes.
- Practice on the ice, field or court (ball drills, shooting drills and other activities) but no contact (no body checking, tackling or heading the ball). Have your child checked by a doctor again before practicing with body contact (step 4).
- Practice on the ice, field or court, with body contact (if your child plays a sport with body contact)
- Return to regular play in games.

Important! If concussion symptoms come back with activity, have your child stop right away and go back to Step 1 for 24 hours (rest). Have a doctor check your child again before restarting Steps 2 and 3.

Children and youth should not go back to sports until a doctor says it's OK.

Go back to the doctor right away if your child:

- Is more confused
- Has a headache that is getting worse
- Throws up more than once
- Is very drowsy or hard to wake up
- Has a seizure

Problems caused by a head injury can get worse later that day or night.

- Follow Minor Head Injury fact sheet guidelines
- Don't leave your child alone
- Check on your child through the night
- Wake your child only if you're worried about how he is breathing or sleeping
- See a doctor right away if your child gets worse.

Numbers to know

Your family doctor: _____

Telehealth Ontario

1-866-797-0000

Health Information from Registered Nurses,
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

TTY: 1-866-797-0007



Preventing concussions...

- Use a helmet. A well fitting helmet can prevent up to 85% of sports related head injuries.
- Stay close to children when they are on playground equipment (even in your back yard). Don't let children 5 and younger climb higher than 5 feet from the ground.
- Learn how. Make sure your child or teen learns the skills to take part in sports without getting seriously hurt (like how to stop on in-line skates, how to head a soccer ball correctly or how to block and tackle in football and rugby).
- Play with respect. Follow the rules of your sport.



Want more info?

Parachute Canada

<http://www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/topic/C9>

