Concussions

What you need to know

**What is the law?**

**Schools:** The Return to Play Act of 2013 requires all public and private schools to create a concussion policy that, at a minimum, includes these standards:

- Prior to the beginning of each athletic season, an information sheet that informs parents or legal guardians of the risk of concussions must be provided.
- If a youth athlete (ages 7 to 18) participating in a youth athletic activity exhibits signs or symptoms of a concussion, he must be removed from play and evaluated by a healthcare provider.
- Before a youth athlete can return to play, he must be cleared by a healthcare provider trained in the management of concussions.

**Recreational leagues:** The law requires recreational leagues to provide an information sheet on the risks of concussion at the time of registration to parents or legal guardians of youth athletes (ages 7 to 18).

**What is a concussion?**

A concussion is a type of brain injury caused by trauma. It can be caused by a hard bump on or a blow to or around the head, which causes the brain to move quickly inside the head.

You do not have to lose consciousness to sustain a concussion. If a concussion is not properly treated, it can make symptoms last longer and delay recovery. A second head trauma before recovery could lead to more serious injuries.

**What are the signs and symptoms?**

There are many signs and symptoms linked with concussion. Your child may not have any symptoms until a few days after the injury. Signs are conditions observed by other people and symptoms are feelings reported by the athlete.

**Signs observed by others**

Athlete:
- Appears dazed or stunned
- Forgets plays
- Is unsure of game or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Shows behavior or personality changes

**Symptoms reported by athlete**
- Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Fuzzy vision
- Feeling foggy
- Concentration problems

Visit [choa.org/concussion](http://choa.org/concussion) for a full list of signs and symptoms.

**What should you do if you suspect a concussion?**

- Do not let your child play with a head injury.
- Check on your child often after the injury for new or worsening signs or symptoms. If the symptoms are getting worse, take him to the nearest emergency department.
- Take your child to the doctor for even one symptom of a concussion.
- Do not give your child pain medicines without talking to your child's doctor. Your child should stop all athletic activity until he is cleared by a licensed healthcare provider.
- Educate your child on concussions and why he cannot play until the symptoms are gone. Your child will need a gradual return to school and activities.
- Tell your child's coaches, school nurses and teachers if he has a concussion.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

**Warning signs**

Call your child's doctor right away if he has:

- New signs that his doctor does not know about
- Existing signs that get worse
- Headaches that get worse
- A seizure
- Neck pain
- Tiredness or is hard to wake
- Continued vomiting
- Weakness in the arms or legs
- Trouble recognizing people or places
- Slurred speech
- Loss of consciousness
- Blood or fluid coming from nose or ear
- A large bump or bruise on scalp, especially in infants younger than 12 months

**Where can I find more information?**

Call [404-785-KIDS (5437)](tel:404-785-KIDS)  
[choa.org/concussion](http://choa.org/concussion)

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This is general information and not specific medical advice. Always consult with a doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about the health of a child. This piece was created by the concussion team at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta.