

# 6 FAQs About Concussion

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.

You cannot see a concussion. You may not notice symptoms right after the injury occurs, and some symptoms may first appear days later—or when you next return to sports or school.

*A concussion is not an injury you should ignore or continue to play with.*

Concussions can affect your abilities at school, on the field, and in everyday activities. Continuing to play sports with a concussion can lead to permanent, serious brain injuries, or even death.

## 1 What are the signs and symptoms of concussion?

### Cognitive

- Trouble concentrating
- Trouble remembering
- Confusion

### Physical

- Nausea
- Dizziness or balance problems
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Headache
- Feeling tired or like you're moving slowly
- Sleeping too much or too little

### Emotional

- Feeling more grouchy or emotional than usual
- Feeling sad
- Feeling nervous

... Or you just don't feel right



## FACTS:

- A concussion is a traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Concussions can occur without loss of consciousness or memory loss
- All concussions are serious
- 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, but everyone recovers at their own rate
- In general, the younger the athlete is, the longer the recovery
- Both cognitive and physical rest are key to recovery
- U.S. annual rate of sports/recreation related concussions: 3.8 million

## 2 I think I've had a concussion—what do I do?

- Pay attention to how you feel
- Be honest with your coach or athletic trainer when he or she asks you how you feel
- Tell your coach or teammates and ask to be taken out of the game
- Tell your parents about any symptoms or problems you are having after a bump on the head
- Get plenty of rest in order to recover — you do not help yourself or your team if you keep playing
- Do not return to practice and games if you are still having any symptoms — it's not worth it
- Return to practice and play only after your brain is 100% healed and your doctor or ATC says it's okay



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### 3 Will I get better?

Most athletes who have a concussion do get better, returning to sports and all the other things they love to do. But everyone recovers at their own rate. Be patient and let it happen. The better you rest the faster get better.

### 5 How do I get better?

The most important thing you can do to get better is to let your brain rest. Stay out of sports (including recess and PE) and any other activity that could lead to another bump on the head, or that gets your heart pumping.

*You also need to minimize how hard your brain has to work in other ways. Activities that make the brain work hard to focus and pay attention will be difficult after a concussion and will slow down the healing process.*

This includes a lot of things that student athletes do each day, like paying attention in class, reading, taking tests and completing homework, as well as playing video games, playing musical instruments and sending emails and text messages.

Your health care professional should talk to you about how to manage schoolwork and other responsibilities while recovering from a concussion. They can also talk to your teachers to drop, change or reschedule tests and other assignments to allow your brain to rest and recover.

### 4 How do I know when I'm better and can return to sports?

When you are 100 percent symptom-free at rest and with a full cognitive (academic) load, you can begin a gradual return to sports under your doctor's care.

*Your doctor will have you gradually increase your level of physical activity over 5-7 days to be sure that you remain free of any symptoms as you become more and more active.*

### 6 Is this really that big a deal?

**Absolutely!** If you do not give your brain the rest that it needs to heal properly, your symptoms may never completely go away.

If you get hit on the head again before you have totally recovered, it often increases your symptoms and can cause a fatal brain injury. Remember: it does not need to be a very hard hit to make things worse.

Experiencing another concussion before you have recovered from the first can also lead to permanent brain injury, or even death.

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 a concussion, but must recover at their own rate. Mental and physical rest are key.

The Concussion Institute at Northside Hospital Duluth is the first facility of its kind in the Southeast. The team of experts at the Concussion Institute help athletes return to the field as quickly, and as safely, as possible.



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