

Your Athlete Might Have a Concussion



What Is a Concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a blow to the head or by forces transmitted to the head following a blow to the face, neck or body. Sometimes, even what seems to be a mild blow to the head, face, neck or body can lead to a brain injury.

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not become apparent or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury.

If your athlete reports any symptoms of a concussion, or if you notice these symptoms, seek medical attention right away.

What Are the Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion?

If your child has experienced a blow to the head, face, neck or body during a game or practice, look for any of the signs and symptoms listed:

Signs observed by parents, guardians or coaches

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets simple instructions
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent
- Moves clumsily or has problems with balance
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to the injury
- Can't recall events after the injury

Symptoms reported by athlete

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

For Your Post-Concussion Needs

Our team of sports medicine physicians, therapists and certified athletic trainers provides a specialized range of services for professional, recreational and young athletes.

Our comprehensive concussion management program includes the use of the ImPACT® (Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) neurocognitive test, which is one of the many tools our sports medicine physicians use in providing best practices for safe return of the athlete to the classroom and sports.

If you suspect your athlete might have a concussion, contact a physician:

Board-Certified Sports Medicine Physicians

Kevin Elder, MD

1919 W. Swann Ave., 3rd floor
Tampa, FL 33606
(813) 254-8055

Ted Farrar, MD

George Rankin, MD

Turley Family Health Center
807 N. Myrtle Ave.
Clearwater, FL 33755
(727) 467-2400

Christopher Salud, MD

900 Carillon Parkway, Suite 303
St. Petersburg, FL 33716
(727) 556-0363

For additional referrals:
(855) 252-8452





What Should You Do if You Think Your Athlete Has a Concussion?

- **Seek medical attention right away.** A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the injury is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports.
- **Keep your child out of play.** Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play until a health care professional says it's okay. Children who return to play too soon – while the brain is still healing – risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. A second concussion that occurs before a first concussion has resolved itself can be very serious. This can cause serious brain damage that could be permanent, affecting your child for a lifetime.
- **Tell your child's coach about any recent concussions.** Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in ANY sport. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell them.
- **Academics** should be a consideration in any conversation concerning sports concussions. New evidence-based research on concussion gives health care professionals guidelines for not only safe return to play but, more importantly, optimal return to classroom learning.

How Can You Help Your Athlete Prevent a Concussion?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from injury.

- Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity (helmets, padding, eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

Florida Concussion Law and Recommendations

Any athlete suspected of suffering a concussion should be removed from the activity immediately. No athlete may return to activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without written medical clearance from an appropriate health care professional (AHCP).

In Florida, an AHCP is defined as either a licensed physician (MD, as per Chapter 458, Florida Statutes), a licensed osteopathic physician (DO, as per Chapter 459, Florida Statutes) or a licensed physician's assistant under the direct supervision of a MD/DO (as per Chapters 458 and 459, Florida Statutes).

Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours. You should also seek medical care and inform your child's coach if you think that your child may have a concussion. Remember, it's better to miss one game than to risk the current and future functioning of your child's brain. When in doubt, sit them out.

When Can My Child Return to Play or Practice?

Following physician evaluation, the return to activity process requires the athlete to be completely symptom free, after which time they would complete a step-wise protocol under the supervision of a licensed athletic trainer, coach or medical professional and then, receive written medical clearance of an AHCP.

According to the most recent international concussion expert consensus statement, athletes should complete the following step-wise process prior to return to play following concussion:

- Removal from contest following signs and symptoms of concussion
- No return to play in current game
- Medical evaluation following the injury to:
 - Correctly diagnose the injury as a concussion
 - Rule out more serious brain injuries such as brain bruising or intracranial bleeding
- Supervised step-wise return to play – steps to be complete in this order:
 1. No activity – rest until completely symptom free
 2. Light aerobic exercise
 3. Sport-specific training
 4. Non-contact drills
 5. Full-contact drills
 6. Game play

