

# Parents' Guide to Concussions in Youth Sports

With the recent changes in many state laws (including Alabama), as well as the ongoing multimillion dollar lawsuit against the NFL, concussions have become one of the most talked about issues in sports and recreation today. Although it's the law that all those involved in youth sports (both paid and volunteer) participate in concussion training, having a basic understanding and knowledge of concussions and their seriousness (spoiler: all concussions are serious) can go a long way to protecting your child from unnecessary risks or complications.

## **What is a Concussion?**

A concussion is a brain injury. They are most often caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to rapidly move inside the skull. This rapid movement causes the brain to crash up against the skull and become injured. This injury can cause temporary or even permanent disruption of normal brain functions.

## **How Do I Recognize a Concussion?**

Concussions are often not accompanied with loss of consciousness. This is why they can be difficult to recognize. The important thing is that people are proactive after an incident has occurred. The following are signs your child may have a concussion.

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Headache
- Nausea
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or fuzzy vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish or slowed down
- Feeling foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Fatigue

## **What Do I do If I Suspect a Concussion?**

The first thing your child should do is to stop physical activity. Continued activity can increase the chances of a mild injury becoming a more serious

one. The best treatment is rest from any physically or mentally strenuous activity until all symptoms have disappeared. You should also contact your pediatrician as soon as possible if you suspect a concussion. If the following symptoms occur, you may have a concussion emergency. In these cases you need to take your child to the emergency room immediately.

- Headaches that worsen
- Seizures
- Neck pain
- Unusual behavior change
- Very drowsy, can't be awakened
- Repeated vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Significant irritability
- Can't recognize people or places
- Increasing confusion
- Weakness or numbness in arms or legs
- Less responsive than usual

### **What Can I Do From the Sidelines?**

Parents can reasonably expect that coaches, referees and sports administrators will be familiar and trained on the subject of concussions. You should also remember to remind your child, the coach, and yourself that no game is worth the young athlete's health. Sometimes all parties can get caught up in the heat of competition and make less than prudent decisions. Just because a kid says he is "ok" does not always mean he is "ok." Taking a few minutes to assess an injured child, and erring on the side of caution, may just keep a mild situation from turning into a serious one.

Morgan County Parks and Recreation is committed to offering fun and safe classes, activities and leagues for all ages. Our athletic staff, coaches and referees have received concussion training, and our main concerns are the safety and health of your children.

For more information on concussions visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html>

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