

# What Is a Concussion?

## Answers for Parents

### What is a concussion?

A concussion is a mild injury to the brain that disrupts how the brain normally works. Concussions are caused by a hit or jolt to the head. Sometimes concussions are casually called “dings” or “getting your bell rung.” No matter what you call it, it is important to get your child examined by a physician!

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

#### Visit the doctor or go to the emergency room IMMEDIATELY if your child is experiencing:

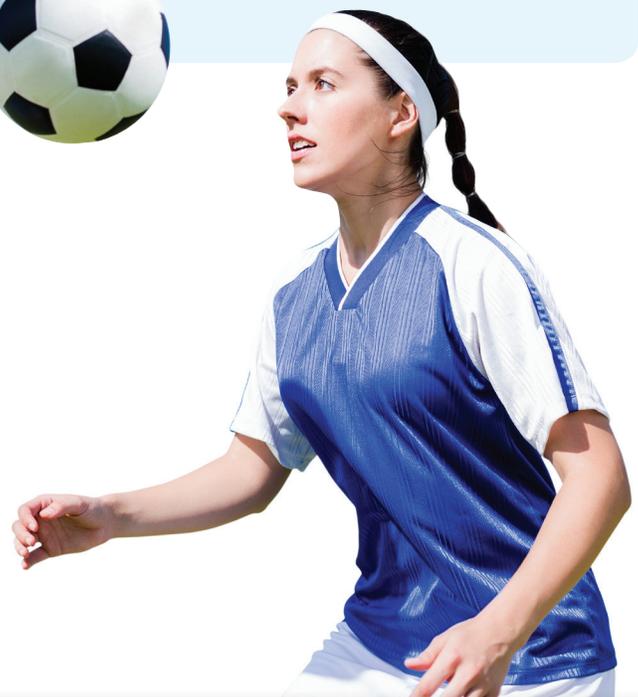
- Increasing confusion
- Severe, worsening or persistent headache
- Multiple vomiting episodes
- Difficulty waking up
- Trouble walking
- Seizure
- Strange behavior
- Weakness
- Loss of or sudden change in vision
- One pupil appearing larger than the other
- Loss of consciousness

#### Visit the doctor within a few days if your child is experiencing:

- Dizziness or confusion
- Memory loss and can't recall what happened around the time of the injury
- Headache
- Nausea
- Sensitivity to light/noise
- Trouble concentrating, difficulty remembering, slowed thinking
- Emotional changes: irritability, sadness, anxiety, etc.

### What happens if your child goes back to sports too soon after a concussion?

While most young people recover from a single concussion, everyone's recovery is unique. If an athlete returns to activity after suffering a concussion before the symptoms have gone away, the result can be prolonged headaches, poor school performance and many other post-concussive syndrome symptoms. Also, another blow to the head while the initial concussion is still healing can cause fatal brain swelling—a condition known as second impact syndrome.



## What can you do to help your child get better?

### 1) Take it easy!

- Rest from all exercise and athletic activities.
- Rest from texting, email, computer time, phone calls, loud music/TV/movies and video games.
- Rest from intense studying and reading, as directed by your doctor.
- Needing more rest than usual after a concussion is normal. So have your child take a break or a short nap whenever he or she feels tired.

### 2) Be safe and smart!

Until your child is feeling better he or she should not do anything that may cause another fall or brain injury. Initially that means no activities like riding a bike, skateboarding or playing sports.

### 3) Break things down into easy steps.

After a concussion, it may be harder to concentrate or pay attention. So, rather than studying for an hour straight, your child should study for no more than 30 minutes at a time before taking a break and then studying for another 30 minutes.

### 4) See a doctor experienced in treating concussions.

## When can your child go back to sports safely?

Once all of the symptoms are gone, a doctor will evaluate your child and determine readiness to return to sports. Your child will be evaluated with tests of memory, concentration, balance and more.

## Why should you choose the comprehensive CHLA Sports Concussion Program for your follow-up?

- Same-day or next-day medical appointments to evaluate your child soon after a concussion
- Consultation to determine appropriate, safe and timely return to sports
- Multidisciplinary team of Board-certified experts in sports medicine, neuropsychology, rehabilitation and more
- Coordination of care with primary care providers, school personnel, coaches, athletic trainers and other relevant personnel



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