Sports Concussion

Understanding Sports Injuries And Conditions

What is a Concussion?
A concussion is a brain injury that disrupts normal brain function. It is usually caused by a sudden blow to the head or body that causes the brain to shake, damaging cells and creating chemical changes in the brain. An athlete does not have to be knocked out or have memory loss to have suffered a concussion. In fact, most athletes who suffer a sports-related concussion do not lose consciousness.

It’s Serious:
- A concussion is a brain injury.
- When in doubt, sit them out! And keep them out!
- Returning to play before complete recovery puts the athlete at risk of a more serious injury.

Recognizing a Concussion

**SIGNs OBSERVED BY OTHERS**
The athlete may:
- Appear dazed or stunned.
- Be confused.
- Forget plays.
- Be unsure of game, score or opponent.
- Exhibit unsteadiness.
- Move clumsily.
- Answer questions slowly.
- Lose consciousness.
- Have memory loss.
- Be more sleepy or tired than usual.
- Seem sad, nervous or anxious.
- Be irritable, easily frustrated or upset.
- Have problems with academic performance.

**SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY THE ATHLETE**
The athlete may complain of:
- Headaches.
- Concentration or memory problems.
- Nausea.
- Balance problems or dizziness.
- Double or blurred vision.
- Feelings of being “in a fog” or slowed down.
- Sensitivity to light or noise.
- Confusion.
- Just “not feeling right” or “feeling down.”

**Red Flags**
If you notice the following, seek immediate medical attention:
- Worsening headache.
- Increasing confusion.
- Extreme sleepiness or trouble waking up.
- Vomiting more than once.
- Seizures.
- Trouble walking or talking.
- Weak or numb arms or legs.
- Any other sudden change in thinking or behavior.

STOP
Any athlete who shows signs or symptoms of a concussion should be removed from play immediately. The athlete should not be allowed to return to any activity until evaluated by a health care professional with experience and training in diagnosis and management of concussions.
Reducing the Risk

Follow the rules

Coaches and parents should emphasize the importance of obeying the rules of the sport and discourage dirty and ill-intentioned play.

Strengthen neck and shoulder muscles to better absorb a hit

If the muscles surrounding the neck and shoulders are strong, they are better able to absorb shock and slow the movement of the head upon impact, which may reduce the risk of a concussion. Athletes should consult a strength coach or athletic trainer for exercises to improve neck and shoulder strength.

Play Smart

Coaches should help players learn that playing hard does not mean sacrificing their health. Help players identify smart ways to make plays that protect the head.