What is a Concussion?
A concussion is a disturbance in brain function that occurs following either a blow to the head or as a result of the violent shaking of the head. In the United States, the annual incidence of sports-related concussion is estimated at 300,000. Estimates regarding the likelihood of an athlete in a contact sport experiencing a concussion may be as high as 19% per season.

Common Signs & Symptoms of a Concussion

Signs Observed
- Appears to be dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment
- Forgets plays
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness
- Shows behavior or personality change
- Forgets events prior to hit (retrograde amnesia)
- Forgets events after hit (anterograde amnesia)

Signs Reported by Athlete
- Headache
- Nausea
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or fuzzy vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish
- Feeling “foggy”
- Change in sleep pattern
- Concentration or memory problems

Post-Concussion Syndrome
Although the majority of athletes who experience a concussion are likely to recover, an unknown number of these individuals may experience chronic cognitive and neuro-behavioral difficulties related to recurrent injury.

Symptoms may include:
- Chronic headaches
- Fatigue
- Sleep difficulties
- Personality changes (i.e. increased irritability, emotionality)
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Dizziness when standing quickly
- Deficits in short-term memory, problem solving, and general academic functioning

In addition to Post-Concussion Syndrome, athletes who suffer a second blow to the head while recovering from an initial concussion can have catastrophic consequences like “Second Impact Syndrome,” which has led to approximately 30 to 40 deaths in the past decade.

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What should you do if you think you or an athlete has a concussion?

1. **Keep the player out of play.**
   If the player has a concussion, his/her brain needs time to heal. Don’t let the player return to play the day of the injury. Make sure the player is seen by an experienced healthcare professional. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.

2. **Seek medical attention right away.**
   A healthcare professional experienced in evaluating for concussion will be able to decide how serious the injury is and when it is safe to allow the athlete to play sports.

3. **Teach your teen that it’s not smart to play with a concussion.**
   Rest is key after a concussion. Sometimes players wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play while injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured players to play. Don’t let a player convince you that they are “just fine.”

4. **Tell all of athlete’s teachers, coaches, and the school nurse about ANY concussion.**
   Coaches, school nurses, and other school staff should know if the athlete has ever had a concussion. Your teen may need to limit activities while he or she is recovering from a concussion. Activities such as studying, driving, working on a computer, playing video games, or exercising may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or worsen. Talk to your healthcare professional, as well as the player’s coaches, school nurse and teachers. If needed, they can help adjust your teen’s school activities during recovery.

**Concussion Treatment**

The goal of concussion treatment is to allow the brain injury to heal. Treatment differs depending on the severity of the injury.

Treatment may include:

- **Rest** – Provide adequate time for recovery and do not rush back to daily activities
- **Re-Injury Prevention** – Avoid activities that might jolt or jar your head until your doctor has given you clearance.
- **Observation by a Responsible Adult** – Ask someone to wake you every few hours as advised by your doctor.
- **Medication Restrictions** – Do not take medicines without your doctor’s permission. This is especially true with aspirin, blood thinners and drugs that cause drowsiness. Avoid the use of alcohol or illicit drugs.
- **Consultation with a Credentialed Impact Consultant.**