



# Concussion in Sports

## *Fact Sheet for LCS Parents and Students*

### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

*A CONCUSSION IS A BRAIN INJURY THAT:*

- Is always serious and can change the way your brain works.
- Can occur during practices or games in any sport or recreational activity or motor vehicle accident.
- Can happen even if you have not lost consciousness.
- Is caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body.
- Can be serious even if you have just been dinged or "had a ringer."

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

*SIGNS OBSERVED BY PARENTS OR OTHERS*

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused
- Forgets instructions
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponents
- Moves clumsily
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality change
- Cannot recall events prior to hit or fall
- Cannot recall events after hit or fall

*SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY THE ATHLETE*

- Head ache or pressure
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problem or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Just not feeling "right" or "feeling down"

### CONCUSSION DANGER SIGNS

Be alert for symptoms that worsen over time. Your child should be seen in an emergency department right away if he/she exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- One pupil (the black part in the middle of the eye) larger than the other
- Drowsiness or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Difficulty recognizing people or places
- Increasing confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Any loss of consciousness should be taken very seriously

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CONCUSSION:

**TELL THE COACH, TEACHER, OR PARENT.** They need to know if you have had a head injury or if you have had a previous concussion.

**SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION.** A health care professional experienced in evaluating concussions will be able to diagnose and treat a concussion and determine when it is safe to return to play.

#### **STAY OUT OF PLAY UNTIL FULLY RECOVERED.**

A concussed brain needs time to heal. While a brain is still healing there is a much greater chance of another concussion. Repeat concussions can slow recovery and increase the likelihood of long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in permanent brain damage and even death.

#### **INFORM SCHOOL STAFF OF ALL CONCUSSIONS.**

A concussion can impact a student's ability to do academic work and other activities such as computer use, studying, or exercising. If needed the school nurse and your teachers can help adjust school activities during the recovery period.

# RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

## **REST IS THE ONLY TREATMENT FOR CONCUSSION.**

Physical and cognitive rest is necessary for the brain to return to normal functioning. Any activities that provoke the reoccurrence of symptoms should be discontinued.

Children with a concussion should never return to sports or recreation activities on the same day the injury occurred. A person who has been removed from a youth athletic activity may not participate in a youth athletic activity until he or she is evaluated by a health care provider and receives a written clearance to participate in the activity from the health care provider. This means the athlete will not return to play until they are cleared in writing by a health care provider for both:

- Physical Education (PE) class,
- Sports practices or games.

Current recommendations are for a stepwise return to play program. In order to resume activity, the athlete must be symptom free and off any pain control or headache medications. The athlete should be carrying a full academic load without any significant accommodations. Finally, the athlete must have clearance from an appropriate health care provider.

The program described below is a guideline for returning concussed athletes when they are symptom free. Athletes with multiple concussions and athletes with prolonged symptoms often require a very different return to activity program and should be managed by a physician that has experience in treating concussion. The following program allows for one step per 24 hours. The program allows for a gradual increase in heart rate/physical exertion, coordination, and then allows contact. If symptoms return, the athlete should stop activity and notify their healthcare provider before progressing to the next level.

- STEP ONE:** About 15 minutes of light exercise:  
stationary biking or jogging
- STEP TWO:** More strenuous running and sprinting  
in the gym or field without equipment
- STEP THREE:** Begin non-contact drills in full  
uniform. May also resume weight lifting
- STEP FOUR:** Full practice with contact
- STEP FIVE:** Full game clearance

*If you think you have a concussion: Don't hide it! Report it! Take time to recover!*

\*This information comes from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Heads Up, Concussion in High School Sports", [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)