



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# CONCUSSIONS, AND WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW!



## The Facts:

- A concussion is a **brain injury**.
- All concussions are **serious**.
- Concussions can occur **without** loss of consciousness.
- Concussion can occur in **any sport**.
- Recognition and proper management of concussions when they **first occur** can help prevent further injury or even death.

## WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth, causing the brain to bounce around or twist within the skull. This sudden movement of the brain can cause stretching and tearing of brain cells, damaging the cells and creating chemical changes in the brain.

### Signs Observed by Coaching Staff

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Is confused about assignment or position.
- Forgets an instruction.
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent.
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness (even briefly).
- Shows mood, behavior or personality changes.
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall.
- Can't recall events after hit or fall.

### Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Headache or "pressure" in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness.
- Double or blurry vision.
- Sensitivity to light.
- Sensitivity to noise.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy.
- Concentration or memory problems.
- Confusion.
- Just "not feeling right" or "feeling down".

Signs and symptoms of concussion generally show up soon after the injury. But the full effect of the injury may not be noticeable at first. You should repeatedly check for signs of concussion and also tell parents what to watch out for at home. Any worsening of concussion signs or symptoms indicate a medical emergency.



### **What Are Concussion Danger Signs?**

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in an athlete with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take the athlete to the emergency department right away if after a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body the athlete exhibits one or more of the following danger signs.

- One pupil is larger than the other.
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened.
- A headache that gets worse.
- Weakness, numbness or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea.
- Slurred speech.
- Convulsions or seizures.
- Cannot recognize people or places.
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless, or agitated.
- Has unusual behavior.
- Loses consciousness (even brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously.)

### **ACTION PLAN**

**No matter whether the athlete is a key member of the team or the game is about to end, an athlete with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from play.**

1. **REMOVE THE ATHLETE FROM PLAY**—Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. **When in doubt, sit them out!**
2. **ENSURE THAT THE ATHLETE IS EVALUATED BY AN APPROPRIATE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL**—Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury. Always let a YMCA Director on duty know about any injury an athlete or child may sustain. They will complete an incident report.
  - Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head or body.
  - Any loss of consciousness (passed out/ knocked out) and if so, for how long.
  - Any memory loss immediately following the injury.
  - Any seizures immediately following the injury.
  - Number of previous concussions, if any.
3. **INFORM THE ATHLETE'S PARENTS OR GUARDIANS**—Let them know about the possible concussion and give them the Heads Up fact sheet for parents. This can help them monitor symptoms that appear or get worse at home.
4. **KEEP THE ATHLETE OUT OF PLAY**—An athlete should be removed from play the day of the injury and until an appropriate health care professional says they are symptom-free and it is OK to return to play. After you remove an athlete with a suspected concussion from practice or play, the decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision.



## **5 –STEP RETURN TO PLAY PLAN**

**Baseline:** Athletes should not have any concussion symptoms. Athletes should only progress to the next step if they do not have any symptoms at the current step.

**Step 1:** Begin with a light aerobic exercise only to increase an athlete's heart rate. This means about 5—10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking, or light jogging. No weight lifting at this point.

**Step 2:** Continue with activities to increase an athlete's heart rate with body or head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weight lifting (reduce time and weight from your typical routine.)

**Step 3:** Add heavy non-contact physical activity, such as sprinting/running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine, non-contact sport specific drills.

**Step 4:** Athlete may return to practice and full contact, if appropriate for the sport, in controlled practice.

**Step 5:** Athlete may return to competition.

If an athlete's symptoms come back or she or he gets new symptoms when becoming more active at any step, this is a sign that the athlete is pushing him or herself too hard. The athlete should stop these activities and the athlete's health care provider should be contacted. After more rest and no concussion symptoms, the athlete should begin at the Baseline step again.

**Safety is the focus and priority of all YMCA staff, volunteers, coaches and parents. Through a safe environment the YMCA is able to teach and lead young athletes;**

- **To understand the importance and practice of good sportsmanship.**
- **To develop an understanding of the sport they have chosen and skills to improve their game.**
- **To have fun in with a diverse group of people.**
- **To introduce and uplift our Christian values.**