



CONCUSSION CONTROL

Keep prevention top of mind in school sports

YOUR CHILD LOVES to imitate his or her favorite sports star—the high-flying dunk, the perfect pitch, the fancy footwork running down the field. Here's another move that young athletes and their parents should follow: Last year, the National Football League announced that it would take a stricter stance on preventing and treating concussions. Athletes at all levels need to recognize the harm that can result from even one blow to the head.

Every year, doctors diagnose more than a million concussion cases in the United States. Those most likely to suffer such a brain injury include adolescents ages 15 to 19. Many of those injuries result from sports activities.

No matter what sport your child plays, you can help protect him or her from serious brain injury. Recognize the signs of a concussion early and take steps to prevent one in the first place.

BRAIN INJURY BASICS

A concussion is a type of brain injury caused by a blow to the head, which can result in a temporary loss of normal brain function. A person who experiences a concussion may not necessarily lose consciousness. If your child suffers a blow to the head, watch for the following symptoms, which can appear immediately or days or weeks later:

- Headache
- Vision problems

- Dizziness or loss of balance
- Nausea or vomiting
- Confusion, memory loss, or difficulty concentrating
- Sensitivity to light or noise

In younger children, you may notice irritability, sleepiness, or crankiness. Your child may also exhibit changes in eating, sleeping, and school performance or lose interest in favorite activities.

A BRAIN-SAVING GAME PLAN

If you suspect your child may have suffered a concussion, talk with your child's doctor right away. A thorough medical exam can determine if your young athlete has a brain injury. The primary treatment for a concussion is rest, so don't let your child be overly active until his or her doctor says it's OK. Your child may need several days, weeks, or even months to completely recover. Experts including the American Academy of Neurology also recommend that an athlete not participate in sports after a concussion without a doctor's permission. Why? While recovering, a person is more susceptible to another concussion, which may lead to permanent brain damage.

Prevention is the best game plan. Always make sure your child wears protective equipment if the activity requires it. The gear should be in good shape and fit well. It's also important to encourage your child to follow the rules of the game.