

What is a Concussion?

Answers for Parents

A concussion is a mild, temporary brain injury that disrupts how the brain normally works. Concussions are caused by a hit or jolt to the head. Symptoms may worsen and new symptoms may occur in the days following the injury. Sometimes concussions are casually called “dings” or “getting your bell rung.” No matter what you call it, it is important to have your child examined by a doctor. Proper concussion care is essential.

What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

Visit the doctor or go to the emergency room **IMMEDIATELY** if your child is experiencing:

- Increasing confusion
- Severe, worsening or persistent headache
- Multiple vomiting episodes
- Difficulty waking up
- Trouble walking
- Seizure
- Strange behavior
- Weakness
- Loss of or sudden change in vision
- One pupil appearing larger than the other
- Loss of consciousness
- Bloody or clear fluid from the ears or nose

Visit the doctor within a few days if your child is experiencing:

- Dizziness or confusion
- Memory loss and inability to recall what happened around the time of the injury
- Headache
- Nausea
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Trouble concentrating
- Emotional changes (e.g., irritability, sadness, anxiety)
- Fatigue or difficulty sleeping

What can you do to help your child get better?

1. Take it easy!

Allow sufficient rest for the brain so it can recover well.

Rest from all contact or strenuous physical activity until evaluated by a doctor. Once evaluated and feeling better, beginning light physical activity/conditioning is not only OK, but encouraged as long as symptoms do not worsen or recur. Continue to avoid overly strenuous or contact activity. Minimize texting, emailing, computer time, phone calls, loud music, watching TV or movies, and playing video games.

Rest from intense studying and reading, as directed by your doctor. Needing more rest than usual after a concussion is normal. Have your child take a break or a short nap whenever they feel tired.

2. Be safe and smart!

Until your child is feeling better, they should not do anything that may cause another fall or brain injury. Initially, that means no activities like bike riding, skateboarding or playing sports.

3. Break things down into easy steps.

After a concussion, it may be harder to concentrate. Rather than studying for an hour straight, your child should study for no more than 30 minutes at a time before taking a break, and then studying for another 30 minutes.

4. See a doctor experienced in treating concussions.

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When can your child go back to sports safely?

Once all of the symptoms are resolved, a doctor will evaluate your child again to determine readiness to return to sports. Your child will be evaluated with tests of memory, concentration, balance and more.

Why should you choose the comprehensive Cedars-Sinai Kerlan-Jobe sports concussion program for your follow-up?

- Same-day or next-day medical appointments to evaluate your child soon after a concussion
- Consultation to determine appropriate, safe and timely return to sports
- Multidisciplinary team of board-certified experts in sports medicine, neuropsychology, rehabilitation and more
- Coordination of care with primary care providers, school officials, coaches, athletic trainers and other relevant personnel



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