



Concussions:

What Every Youth Coach Needs to Know

1 How to minimize the risk of concussion and serious/catastrophic head/neck injury:

- By teaching and drilling players in the proper fundamentals of blocking and tackling, keeping their heads up while tackling and running with the ball, never making contact with the crown of the helmet or facemask.
- By ensuring that athletes are given proper conditioning exercises to strengthen their bodies to withstand the workloads and energy expenditure throughout a game;
- By ensuring that they have strengthened their necks to hold their heads up in the proper position when tackling and to absorb impact energy to control head movement, and have appropriate flexibility and range of motion of the shoulder and neck.
- By ensuring that all players' helmets have been properly reconditioned and fit properly before the season starts, that proper fit is maintained during the season, and that players are educated about the use and care of the helmet and follow proper fit guidelines and proper use.
- By emphasizing rules designed to minimize head injuries, such as the rule against helmet-to-helmet contact in football, leading with the head in tackling, checking from behind and into the boards in hockey, blindside hits in lacrosse, flying elbows on 50/50 balls in soccer.

2 Becoming educated in concussion (such as by taking the CDC's Heads Up on-line training program for coaches).

3 Immediately removing from practice or play a player who is even suspected of having suffered a concussion and arranging for an immediate clinical evaluation by medical professional with concussion expertise.



4 Understanding that if any of the signs of concussion are observed, or the athlete reports experiencing any concussion symptoms after a direct or indirect blow to an athlete's head, the athlete must be removed from play, have his helmet taken away, and not allowed to return to play under any circumstances.

5 Actively, consistently, and repeatedly encouraging athletes to honestly self-report concussion symptoms by creating an climate in which athletes feel comfortable reporting concussion symptoms and encouraging teammates to do the same by:

- Emphasizing that honest and immediate concussion symptom reporting helps the athlete and the team and is the sign of a good team member;
- being understanding and supportive, especially in front of other athletes, when an athlete reports concussive symptoms and is unable to continue playing;
- Reassuring athletes that they will not jeopardize their position as a starter or place on the team if they self-report, that no one will question their toughness, call them "wimps" or "sissies," or ostracize them.
- Inform players that deliberate hits to another player's head (even if not called as a penalty) may subject them to disciplinary action;
- Advise athletes that they will be considered in violation of team rules, subjecting them to possible discipline from game suspensions up to and including disqualification for the season if found to have impeded appropriate evaluation and management of his own concussion by failing to report or under-report symptoms (theirs or a fellow player's) intentionally; underperforming on baseline neuropsychological tests in order to maximize chances of being cleared to play even with symptoms; or indicating they are symptom-free so that they can be cleared to play in the next game when they are still experiencing symptoms.
- employing a "buddy system" in which athletes are assigned to watch for signs or reports from designated teammates of symptoms of concussion.