

# Youth Concussion Education, Awareness and Advocacy



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The National Football League, USA Football, the Brain Injury Association of Washington, and the American College of Sports Medicine, among many other organizations, strongly support the adoption of laws to prevent traumatic brain injury in youth athletes in all fifty states. The Zackery Lystedt law, passed in Washington state, through the efforts and hard work of advocates in the medical, educational and athletic fields represents model legislation. The bill includes three elements essential to protecting youth athletes in all sports:

- (1) Inform and educate youth athletes, their parents and guardians and require them to sign a concussion information form;
- (2) Removal of a youth athlete who appears to have suffered a concussion from play or practice at the time of the suspected concussion; and
- (3) Requiring a youth athlete to be cleared by a licensed health care professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions before returning to play or practice.

This packet of materials includes information about the Zackery Lystedt law and frequently asked questions regarding it. In addition, educational materials on the topic of youth concussions are included. These documents published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and USA Football and endorsed by the American College of Sports Medicine, the National Football League, USA Football, and the Brain Injury Association of Washington will provide significant information about youth concussions.

As of November 2010, nine states have adopted laws containing the three key provisions of the Zackery Lystedt law. We encourage you to adopt a similar law in your state and encourage you to reach out to our organizations if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Miller  
Vice President  
Government Relations and Public Policy  
National Football League



Stanley A. Herring, M.D.  
Chairman  
Advocacy and Education Subcommittee  
NFL Head, Neck and Spine Committee



Richard Adler  
Chairman/President  
Executive Board  
Brain Injury Association-Washington



James R. Whitehead  
Executive Vice President and CEO  
American College of Sports Medicine



Scott Hallenbeck  
Executive Director  
USA Football

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CONCUSSION-PREVENTION LAWS**

### ***How widespread are concussions among youth athletes?***

An estimated 400,000 high school athletes sustained concussions while participating in five major male sports and four major female sports during the 2005-2008 school years<sup>i</sup>. In addition, experts believe that the prevalence of sports-related concussions among young people in all sports is significantly higher than reported.

Moreover, the number of youth athletes taken to emergency rooms with sports-related concussions doubled during the 10-year-period from 1997 to 2007<sup>ii</sup>. Meanwhile, among youth aged 14 to 19, emergency room visits for concussions sustained during team sports more than tripled over the same period<sup>iii</sup>.

### ***What dangers do these head injuries pose to young athletes?***

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, or TBI, which changes the way the brain normally works. Recognizing and responding to concussions when they first occur help to aid recovery and to prevent prolonging concussion symptoms, chronic brain damage or even death. Yet, a recent study estimated that more than 40 percent of high school athletes return to participate in school athletics before they have fully recovered from these serious head injuries<sup>iv</sup>.

### ***Do concussions involve youth athletes in all sports and at any age or is it just an injury sustained by boys who play football?***

Concussions can occur in athletes of any age and in any sport or recreational activity. In fact, each year, U.S. emergency departments treat an estimated 135,000 sports-related and recreation-related TBIs, including concussions, among children ages 5 to 18<sup>v</sup>. In addition, children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults. While youth sports concussions often are associated with football, the rate of concussions in girl's high school soccer is almost as high. Research also indicates that there may be gender differences in how boys and girls recover from concussions.<sup>vi</sup>

### ***How many states have enacted laws related to concussion-awareness, prevention and management?***

As of October 2010, eight states have adopted similar concussion-awareness and prevention laws initially adopted in Washington, known as the Zackery Lystedt law, including Oregon, New Mexico, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Virginia, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. In many other states, active coalitions are pushing to enact similar legislation.

### ***What are the key elements of a concussion-prevention and management bill?***

An effective concussion-prevention bill follows the example of the State of Washington's Zackery Lystedt law. It includes three essential elements: (1) inform and educate student athletes, their parents and guardians and require them to sign a concussion information form; (2) removal of a student-athlete who appears to have suffered a concussion from play or practice at the time of the suspected

concussion; and (3) requiring an athlete to be cleared by a licensed medical professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions before returning to play or practice.

There is an international consensus on return to play guidelines for youth, adopted at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Concussion in Sport in Zurich, in November 2008, which states that “It is not appropriate for a child or adolescent athlete with concussion to RTP on the same day as the injury regardless of the level of athletic performance.”<sup>vii</sup>

***What is the cost of implementing a concussion prevention and awareness bill?***

Zero. The bill is revenue neutral. There are no mandates in the bill and no requirements that resources be spent to hire or train medical professionals or to purchase equipment. Free information on concussions for high school and youth coaches, parents, athletes, as well as school professionals is publicly available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) website at [www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion), including a youth concussions poster found at [www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/poster\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/pdf/poster_Eng.pdf) designed to hang in every locker room across the country.

***What are the penalties for violating the concussion prevention and awareness law? Who is liable if the law is not followed?***

There is no liability attached to Washington’s Zackery Lystedt law. It does not mandate any civil or criminal penalties, nor does it create greater liability for individuals and/or organizations. Indeed, the education and awareness efforts and requirement of medical clearance before return to play has decreased the variability of care and decreased liability. Wherever the law is passed, the community can determine if and how to monitor and enforce the law.

***What about implementing the law in rural areas where it may be more challenging to find medical professionals?***

The law does not require a specific medical specialist to participate in every evaluation. Rather, the language of the Washington statute requiring an athlete “to be cleared by a licensed medical professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions before returning to play or practice” permits a wide range of qualified individuals to determine a youth athlete’s suitability for returning to play. For example, in Washington State, the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association decided that qualifying medical professionals included: medical doctors, osteopaths, nurse practitioners, athletic trainers, and physician assistants.

***What is the impact of concussion-prevention laws on private sports organizations?***

These laws may be written in such a way as to apply not only to public sports organizations but also to private sports organizations, many of which maintain public-sector connections/affiliations (such as the use of public facilities). For example, in Washington private sports groups are required by law to carry insurance to play on publicly-owned playing fields. The Zackery Lystedt law amended that insurance-based law to require private nonprofits to comply with the policies on the management of concussions and head injuries in youth sports.

### **What impact have concussion-prevention laws had in states that have passed them?**

The Zackery Lystedt law was the first concussion-prevention state law to pass in 2009. While no comprehensive and detailed assessment can yet be made, early and anecdotal data suggests that the law is having an immediate and positive impact. It is helping meet a critical goal -- preventing preventable brain injuries and making sports and recreational activities safer for youth.

### **What organizations have supported such measures?**

A broad coalition of groups representing teachers and parents, sports medicine, medical professionals, school administrators, the disability community and athletic organizations have supported concussion-prevention legislation at the state and federal level. These organizations include the National Football League, American College of Sports Medicine, USA Football, National School Boards Association, Parent Teacher Association, National Association of School Nurses, National Council of Youth Sports, The Sarah Jane Brain Foundation, National Disability Rights Network, National Athletic Trainers' Association, National Association of Health and Fitness, the Brain Injury Association of America, the Brain Injury Association of Washington, and many others.

### **What law, if any, has Congress proposed or passed regarding concussion prevention and awareness?**

The "Protecting Student Athletes from Concussions Act of 2010" incorporates the same core principles of the Lystedt law and was introduced in Congress in September of 2010. If passed, the bill would require school districts to develop and implement a minimum standard, community-based plan for concussion safety and management. Of course, states would be able to implement standards far exceeding these basic, minimum standards.

### **Where may I find/read a copy of the Zackery Lystedt law?**

The Zackery Lystedt law may be found in this packet. It may also be found online by visiting:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/CodeReviser/documents/sessionlaw/2009pam3.pdf>

### **Where may I find more information about the dangers of concussions and passing a law in my state?**

More information about concussions may be found on the website of the CDC. You also may watch an NFL-produced video about enacting a concussions-prevention law in your state, which is available at [NFL.com/youthconcussions](http://NFL.com/youthconcussions) and on the CDC's website as well.

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<sup>i</sup> Nationwide Children's Hospital, Concussions Clinic, Ohio State University

<sup>ii</sup> Bakhos L., Linakis J., et al. "Emergency Department Visits for Concussions in Young Child Athletes," *Pediatrics*, 2010.

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>iv</sup> Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, Ohio

<sup>v</sup> *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007.

<sup>vi</sup> *Journal of Athletic Training*, 2007

<sup>vii</sup> McCrory P, Meeuwisse W, et al. "Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport, 3rd International Conference on Concussion in Sport," *Clinical Journal of Sports Medicine*, 2009.

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

**ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1824**

Chapter 475, Laws of 2009

61st Legislature  
2009 Regular Session

YOUTH SPORTS--HEAD INJURY POLICIES

EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/26/09

Passed by the House April 20, 2009  
Yeas 98 Nays 0

FRANK CHOPP

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Speaker of the House of Representatives**

Passed by the Senate April 2, 2009  
Yeas 45 Nays 0

BRAD OWEN

\_\_\_\_\_  
**President of the Senate**

Approved May 14, 2009, 11:24 a.m.

CHRISTINE GREGOIRE

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Governor of the State of Washington**

CERTIFICATE

I, Barbara Baker, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1824** as passed by the House of Representatives and the Senate on the dates hereon set forth.

BARBARA BAKER

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Chief Clerk**

FILED

May 18, 2009

**Secretary of State  
State of Washington**

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**ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 1824**

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AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE

Passed Legislature - 2009 Regular Session

**State of Washington                      61st Legislature                      2009 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Rodne, Quall, Anderson, Lias, Walsh, Pettigrew, Priest, Simpson, Kessler, Rolfes, Johnson, Sullivan, and Morrell

Read first time 01/30/09. Referred to Committee on Education.

1            AN ACT Relating to requiring the adoption of policies for the  
2 management of concussion and head injury in youth sports; amending RCW  
3 4.24.660; and adding a new section to chapter 28A.600 RCW.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5            **Sec. 1.** RCW 4.24.660 and 1999 c 316 s 3 are each amended to read  
6 as follows:

7            (1) A school district shall not be liable for an injury to or the  
8 death of a person due to action or inaction of persons employed by, or  
9 under contract with, a youth program if:

10            (a) The action or inaction takes place on school property and  
11 during the delivery of services of the youth program;

12            (b) The private nonprofit group provides proof of being insured,  
13 under an accident and liability policy issued by an insurance company  
14 authorized to do business in this state, that covers any injury or  
15 damage arising from delivery of its services. Coverage for a policy  
16 meeting the requirements of this section must be at least fifty  
17 thousand dollars due to bodily injury or death of one person, or at  
18 least one hundred thousand dollars due to bodily injury or death of two  
19 or more persons in any incident. The private nonprofit shall also

1 provide a statement of compliance with the policies for the management  
2 of concussion and head injury in youth sports as set forth in section  
3 2 of this act; and

4 (c) The group provides proof of such insurance before the first use  
5 of the school facilities. The immunity granted shall last only as long  
6 as the insurance remains in effect.

7 (2) Immunity under this section does not apply to any school  
8 district before January 1, 2000.

9 (3) As used in this section, "youth programs" means any program or  
10 service, offered by a private nonprofit group, that is operated  
11 primarily to provide persons under the age of eighteen with  
12 opportunities to participate in services or programs.

13 (4) This section does not impair or change the ability of any  
14 person to recover damages for harm done by: (a) Any contractor or  
15 employee of a school district acting in his or her capacity as a  
16 contractor or employee; or (b) the existence of unsafe facilities or  
17 structures or programs of any school district.

18 NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. A new section is added to chapter 28A.600  
19 RCW to read as follows:

20 (1)(a) Concussions are one of the most commonly reported injuries  
21 in children and adolescents who participate in sports and recreational  
22 activities. The centers for disease control and prevention estimates  
23 that as many as three million nine hundred thousand sports-related and  
24 recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year.  
25 A concussion is caused by a blow or motion to the head or body that  
26 causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. The risk of  
27 catastrophic injuries or death are significant when a concussion or  
28 head injury is not properly evaluated and managed.

29 (b) Concussions are a type of brain injury that can range from mild  
30 to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works.  
31 Concussions can occur in any organized or unorganized sport or  
32 recreational activity and can result from a fall or from players  
33 colliding with each other, the ground, or with obstacles. Concussions  
34 occur with or without loss of consciousness, but the vast majority  
35 occurs without loss of consciousness.

36 (c) Continuing to play with a concussion or symptoms of head injury  
37 leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury and

1 even death. The legislature recognizes that, despite having generally  
2 recognized return to play standards for concussion and head injury,  
3 some affected youth athletes are prematurely returned to play resulting  
4 in actual or potential physical injury or death to youth athletes in  
5 the state of Washington.

6 (2) Each school district's board of directors shall work in concert  
7 with the Washington interscholastic activities association to develop  
8 the guidelines and other pertinent information and forms to inform and  
9 educate coaches, youth athletes, and their parents and/or guardians of  
10 the nature and risk of concussion and head injury including continuing  
11 to play after concussion or head injury. On a yearly basis, a  
12 concussion and head injury information sheet shall be signed and  
13 returned by the youth athlete and the athlete's parent and/or guardian  
14 prior to the youth athlete's initiating practice or competition.

15 (3) A youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or  
16 head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from competition at  
17 that time.

18 (4) A youth athlete who has been removed from play may not return  
19 to play until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care  
20 provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussion and  
21 receives written clearance to return to play from that health care  
22 provider. The health care provider may be a volunteer. A volunteer  
23 who authorizes a youth athlete to return to play is not liable for  
24 civil damages resulting from any act or omission in the rendering of  
25 such care, other than acts or omissions constituting gross negligence  
26 or willful or wanton misconduct.

27 (5) This section may be known and cited as the Zackery Lystedt law.

Passed by the House April 20, 2009.

Passed by the Senate April 2, 2009.

Approved by the Governor May 14, 2009.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State May 18, 2009.

(INSERT SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION NAME HERE)

Concussion Information Sheet

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, **all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly.** In other words, even a “ding” or a bump on the head can be serious. You can’t see a concussion and most sports concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away.

<b>Symptoms may include one or more of the following:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headaches</li><li>• “Pressure in head”</li><li>• Nausea or vomiting</li><li>• Neck pain</li><li>• Balance problems or dizziness</li><li>• Blurred, double, or fuzzy vision</li><li>• Sensitivity to light or noise</li><li>• Feeling sluggish or slowed down</li><li>• Feeling foggy or groggy</li><li>• Drowsiness</li><li>• Change in sleep patterns</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Amnesia</li><li>• “Don’t feel right”</li><li>• Fatigue or low energy</li><li>• Sadness</li><li>• Nervousness or anxiety</li><li>• Irritability</li><li>• More emotional</li><li>• Confusion</li><li>• Concentration or memory problems (forgetting game plays)</li><li>• Repeating the same question/comment</li></ul>

<b>Signs observed by teammates, parents and coaches include:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appears dazed</li><li>• Vacant facial expression</li><li>• Confused about assignment</li><li>• Forgets plays</li><li>• Is unsure of game, score, or opponent</li><li>• Moves clumsily or displays incoordination</li><li>• Answers questions slowly</li><li>• Slurred speech</li><li>• Shows behavior or personality changes</li><li>• Can’t recall events prior to hit</li><li>• Can’t recall events after hit</li><li>• Seizures or convulsions</li><li>• Any change in typical behavior or personality</li><li>• Loses consciousness</li></ul>

**What can happen if my child keeps on playing with a concussion or returns too soon?**

(INSERT SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION NAME HERE)

### Concussion Information Sheet

Athletes with the signs and symptoms of concussion should be removed from play immediately. Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury. There is an increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after that concussion occurs, particularly if the athlete suffers another concussion before completely recovering from the first one. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences. It is well known that adolescent or teenage athletes will often fail to report symptoms of injuries. Concussions are no different. As a result, education of administrators, coaches, parents and students is the key to student-athlete's safety.

#### **If you think your child has suffered a concussion**

Any athlete even suspected of suffering a concussion should be removed from the game or practice immediately. No athlete may return to activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance. Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours. The new "Zackery Lystedt Law" in Washington now requires the consistent and uniform implementation of long and well-established return-to-play concussion guidelines that have been recommended for several years:

"a youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from competition at that time"

and

"...may not return to play until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussion and received written clearance to return to play from that health care provider".

You should also inform your child's coach if you think that your child may have a concussion. Remember it's better to miss one game than miss the whole season. And when in doubt, the athlete sits out.

For current and up-to-date information on concussions you can go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports/>

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Student-athlete Name Printed

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Student-athlete Signature

---

Date

---

Parent or Legal Guardian Printed

---

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature

---

Date

CHRISTINE O. GREGOIRE  
Governor



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 40002 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0002 • (360) 753-6780 • [www.governor.wa.gov](http://www.governor.wa.gov)

December 8, 2010

Roger Goodell, Commissioner  
National Football League  
280 Park Avenue, Floor 12W  
New York, NY 10017-1206

Dear Commissioner Goodell:

From the time I was first approached to support a law to protect youth athletes from the risks of concussions, I have focused on, and learned much about, this important issue. We all share the desire to protect our children from serious, yet preventable, health risks. This is why I am pleased to share Washington State's experience with the Zackery Lystedt Law.

I feel it is my responsibility to protect the health and safety of our young athletes while carefully limiting the cost to Washington State taxpayers. Our state, like many others in our country, is facing significant budget challenges, so any new expenditures have to be carefully scrutinized.

I am thrilled to report that the Zackery Lystedt Law is working. We are seeing a decrease in concussions and other head injuries in our student athlete population. I believe the adoption of this important legislation has saved our state money in emergency medical care, rehabilitation, and other services children need when they suffer the consequences of untreated brain injuries. In addition, school districts have not been required to hire medical professionals or trainers, and no additional significant investments were needed to comply with this law.

Thank you for your leadership in working to have a version of the Zackery Lystedt Law adopted around the country. Please feel free to share this with other states as you work to keep our country's children active and safe.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris".

Christine O. Gregoire  
Governor





## Heads Up Online Training Course

*Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports* is a free, online course available to coaches, parents, and others helping to keep athletes safe from concussion. It features interviews with leading experts, dynamic graphics and interactive exercises, and compelling storytelling to help you recognize a concussion and know how to respond if you think that your athlete might have a concussion.

### What You Will Learn

This course will help you:

- Understand a concussion and the potential consequences of this injury,
- Recognize concussion signs and symptoms and how to respond,
- Learn about steps for returning to activity (play and school) after a concussion, and
- Focus on prevention and preparedness to help keep athletes safe season-to-season.

You can help make your league and school sports safer and healthier for all athletes. Learn when to make the call to pull an athlete off the field, ice, court, or track, and work with athletes, parents, and league and school officials to implement a concussion action plan and prevention strategies.

### Course Highlights

#### *Concussion Basics*

- Understand concussion and what happens to the brain,
- Discover what causes a concussion, and
- Learn the potential consequences of concussion.

#### *Recognize and Respond to a Suspected Concussion*

- Focus on what to look for and when to pull athletes out of play,
- Watch for danger signs and seeking immediate medical attention, and
- Learn the four-step, “Heads Up” action plan when a concussion is suspected.

## *Helping Athletes Get Back to Play and to School*

- Characterize the gradual steps for returning to activity (play and school), and
- Review a concussion preparedness checklist to guide you through pre-, mid-, and post-seasons.

## *Resource Center*

- Access additional concussion information, videos, presentations by leading experts, fact sheets, communication strategies for talking with parents and athletes, and other tools.

[Click here to take the training](#)

**[Follow us on Facebook](#)  and learn more about concussion:  
[www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion).**

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Page last reviewed: August 24, 2010

Page last updated: August 24, 2010

Content source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control](#)

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 1600 Clifton Rd. Atlanta, GA  
30333, USA  
800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) TTY: (888) 232-6348, 24 Hours/Every Day -  
[cdcinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:cdcinfo@cdc.gov)



# HEADS+UP

## CONCUSSION IN HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

A FACT SHEET FOR **PARENTS**

### What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days after the injury. If your teen reports **one or more** symptoms of concussion listed below, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, keep your teen out of play and seek medical attention right away.

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians	Symptoms Reported by Athlete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appears dazed or stunned</li> <li>• Is confused about assignment or position</li> <li>• Forgets an instruction</li> <li>• Is unsure of game, score, or opponent</li> <li>• Moves clumsily</li> <li>• Answers questions slowly</li> <li>• Loses consciousness (<i>even briefly</i>)</li> <li>• Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes</li> <li>• Can't recall events <i>prior</i> to hit or fall</li> <li>• Can't recall events <i>after</i> hit or fall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headache or “pressure” in head</li> <li>• Nausea or vomiting</li> <li>• Balance problems or dizziness</li> <li>• Double or blurry vision</li> <li>• Sensitivity to light or noise</li> <li>• Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy</li> <li>• Concentration or memory problems</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Just not “feeling right” or is “feeling down”</li> </ul>

### How can you help your teen prevent a concussion?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your teens can take to protect themselves from concussion and other injuries.

- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity. It should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.

- Ensure that they follow their coaches' rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.

### What should you do if you think your teen has a concussion?

- 1. Keep your teen out of play.** If your teen has a concussion, her/his brain needs time to heal. Don't let your teen return to play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says your teen is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.
- 2. Seek medical attention right away.** A health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your teen to return to sports.
- 3. Teach your teen that it's not smart to play with a concussion.** Rest is key after a concussion. Sometimes athletes wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Don't let your teen convince you that s/he's “just fine.”
- 4. Tell all of your teen's coaches and the student's school nurse about ANY concussion.** Coaches, school nurses, and other school staff should know if your teen has ever had a concussion. Your teen may need to limit activities while s/he is recovering from a concussion. Things such as studying, driving, working on a computer, playing video games, or exercising may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse. Talk to your health care professional, as well as your teen's coaches, school nurse, and teachers. If needed, they can help adjust your teen's school activities during her/his recovery.

#### If you think your teen has a concussion:

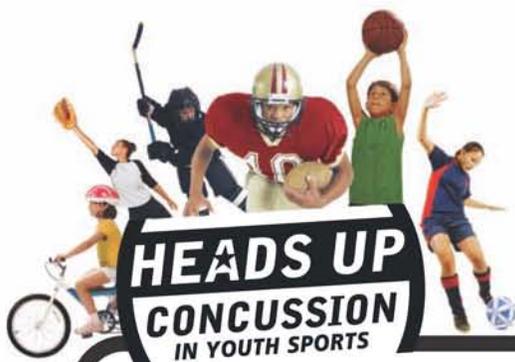
Don't assess it yourself. Take him/her out of play. Seek the advice of a health care professional.

**It's better to miss one game than the whole season.**

For more information and to order additional materials *free-of-charge*, visit: [www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION





## A Fact Sheet for **ATHLETES**

### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that:

- Is caused by a bump or blow to the head
- Can change the way your brain normally works
- Can occur during practices or games in any sport
- Can happen even if you haven't been knocked out
- Can be serious even if you've just been "dinged"

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light
- Bothered by noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Difficulty paying attention
- Memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

- **Tell your coaches and your parents.** Never ignore a bump or blow to the head even if you feel fine. Also, tell your coach if one of your teammates might have a concussion.

- **Get a medical check up.** A doctor or health care professional can tell you if you have a concussion and when you are OK to return to play.
- **Give yourself time to get better.** If you have had a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have a second concussion. Second or later concussions can cause damage to your brain. It is important to rest until you get approval from a doctor or health care professional to return to play.

### HOW CAN I PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

- Follow your coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Use the proper sports equipment, including personal protective equipment (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). In order for equipment to protect you, it must be:
  - The right equipment for the game, position, or activity
  - Worn correctly and fit well
  - Used every time you play

***It's better to miss one game than the whole season.***

# CONCUSSION

**A Must Read for Young Athletes**

**Let's Take Brain Injuries Out of Play**

## CONCUSSION FACTS

- A concussion is a brain injury that affects how your brain works.
- A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body:
  - from contact with another player, hitting a hard surface such as the ground, ice, or court, or
  - being hit by a piece of equipment such as a lacrosse stick, hockey puck, or field hockey ball.
- A concussion can happen even if you haven't been knocked unconscious.
- If you think you have a concussion, you should not return to play on the day of the injury and until a health care professional says you are OK to return to play.

## CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

- Concussion symptoms differ with each person and with each injury, and may not be noticeable for hours or days. Common symptoms include:
  - Headache
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Confusion
  - Bothered by light or noise
  - Difficulty remembering or paying attention
  - Double or blurry vision
  - Balance problems or dizziness
  - Slowed reaction time
  - Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
  - Sleep problems
  - Feeling irritable, more emotional, or "down"
  - Loss of consciousness

## WHY SHOULD I REPORT MY SYMPTOMS?

- Unlike with some other injuries, playing or practicing with concussion symptoms is dangerous and can lead to a longer recovery and a delay in your return to play.
- While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes for you to recover and the likelihood of long term problems.
- In rare cases, repeat concussions in young athletes can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to your brain. They can even be fatal.

*During recovery, exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration (such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games) may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse.*

\*For more information about concussion and other types of traumatic brain injuries, go to

**[www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion)**

A part of CDC's Heads Up series

## What Should I Do if I Think I Have a Concussion?

### **DON'T HIDE IT, REPORT IT.**

Ignoring your symptoms and trying to "tough it out" often makes symptoms worse. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. Don't let anyone pressure you into continuing to practice or play with a concussion.

### **GET CHECKED OUT.**

Only a health care professional can tell if you have a concussion and when it's OK to return to play. Sports have injury timeouts and player substitutions so that you can get checked out and the team can perform at its best. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play.

### **TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRAIN.**

A concussion can affect your ability to do schoolwork and other activities. Most athletes with a concussion get better and return to sports, but it is important to rest and give your brain time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs while your brain is still healing can cause long-term problems that may change your life forever.

*All concussions are serious. Don't hide it, report it. Take time to recover. It's better to miss one game than the whole season.*





USA Football serves as the sport's national governing body on youth and amateur levels. An independent non-profit based in downtown Indianapolis, USA Football leads the game's development, inspires participation and ensures a positive experience for all youth and amateur players. USA Football was endowed by the NFL Youth Football Fund in 2002.

Working in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention since 2007 as well as other credentialed medical organizations and doctors regarding player health and safety, USA Football stands among leaders in youth sports concussion education, particularly in youth football. The organization has built the first football-specific online youth football coaching course that includes chapters and comprehension quizzes encompassing concussion education and management, heat and hydration preparedness and equipment fitting guidelines. USA Football's members – youth football coaches, players, league commissioners and game officials – reside in all 50 states.

USA Football partners with collegiate athletic conferences, the NFL and its teams to promote concussion education through its 80-plus annual football training events and national campaigns. Dozens of articles, downloadable online resources and video promoting concussion education and management reside at [usafootball.com](http://usafootball.com) and are available at no cost. Approximately 1 million visitors reach [usafootball.com](http://usafootball.com) annually.



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## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Concussion Awareness

#### What Youth Football Coaches Should Know About Concussions

By Michael D. Goodlett, M.D., Lawrence J. Lemak, M.D.  
March 11, 2009, revised December 28, 2009

**Recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion to ensure your players' safety. An easy rule of thumb to follow is when in doubt, sit them out.**

##### WHAT COACHES SHOULD KNOW

\*A concussion is any change in an athlete's behavior, awareness, and/or physical feelings caused by a direct or indirect blow to the head.

\*Any concussion has the potential to be a serious injury.

\*Before letting an athlete go back to play, a concussion should be evaluated by a doctor.

\*An athlete should never return to play while exhibiting any signs or symptoms of a concussion either at rest or with exertion. When in doubt, sit them out!

\*There is an increased risk of suffering subsequent concussions after a first concussion.

\*Any head injury associated with loss of consciousness must be treated as a suspected head, neck, or back injury.

\*The only instances in which an athlete's helmet and shoulder pads should be removed is when a medical authority believes that it is necessary for the care of the athlete, or if the equipment interferes with the rescuers' ability to provide required CPR.

\*If necessary to provide care for life-threatening conditions, it is recommended that the facemask be removed rather than the whole helmet. A tool to remove the facemask should be in the first aid kit.

\*For any head injury, activate the Emergency Action Plan and follow the emergency action steps, Check-Call-Care.

When a player is hit, he may receive a blow to the head and become unconscious or demonstrate changes in behavior. If the player regains consciousness, seems to be alert and oriented, and is eager to play, a coach may feel the player is fully recovered and allow him back into the game or practice. However, the player has suffered a concussion. Failure to recognize a concussion can potentially lead to coma and death particularly if a second impact occurs. Coaches need to be aware of the signs of concussions and treat the situation properly.

Concussions are caused by a force being transmitted to the head. The force may be caused by any direct or indirect hit to the head or body and can cause changes in behavior, awareness, or physical feeling in the injured person. Concussions often go unrecognized by coaches because they are underreported by athletes who want to continue competing. Athletes often will minimize or deny symptoms. Maintaining a high level of suspicion and having some knowledge of the individual athlete's personality helps coaches in early detection of the signals of concussion. This awareness can prevent additional concussive injury, potential long-term brain damage, or other possible catastrophic outcomes.

##### On-The-Field Evaluations

If there is a forceful blow to the head, with or without loss of consciousness, the coach should suspect a head injury and also be concerned that the neck or back has been injured. When caring for the player on the field, tell him not to nod or shake his head during the assessment, but to say yes or no. The player's helmet should also be left in place. The goal is to minimize movement. If the head impact has caused the player to become unconscious or show the signs of concussion listed below, activate the Emergency Action Plan and follow the emergency action steps, **Check-Call-Care**. **Check** the scene for safety and check the ill or injured athlete, **Call** 9-1-1 or the local emergency number when needed, and



*Knowing the signs and symptoms of a concussion will help a youth football coach feel more comfortable and be more prepared in case of an emergency.*

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**Care** for the injured player until EMS personnel arrive.

**To Care For Serious Injuries To The Head, Neck, And Back**

Follow basic precautions to prevent disease transmission.

Minimize movement of the player's head, neck, and back by putting your hands on both sides of the player's helmet or head. Maintain an open airway using a jaw-thrust maneuver. Have the player remain in the position that you found him until EMS personnel arrive and take over.

Monitor the player's airway, breathing, and circulation.

If life-threatening symptoms are present, it is recommended that the facemask of the athlete's helmet be removed, rather than removing the entire helmet. This will allow access to an airway should the athlete stop breathing.

A tool for removing the facemask should be in the team's first aid kit.

The coach should evaluate the symptoms listed below if he suspects a player may have a concussion requiring immediate care.

**The only instance in which an athlete's helmet and shoulder pads should be removed is when a medical authority believes that it is necessary for the care of the athlete, or if the equipment interferes with the rescuers' ability to provide CPR.**

Symptoms that require immediate activation of the Emergency Action Plan and immediate removal to a medical facility are:

- \*Period of unconsciousness;
- \*Confusion, disorientation to time and place;
- \*Severe headache or vomiting;
- \*Appears sleepy, pale, and is sweating;
- \*Blurred vision, slurred speech, and muscle weakness;
- \*Neck pain.

**Checking For Concussion**

If the player is removed from the field after receiving a head impact, it is important to continue evaluating the player every five minutes for at least 30 minutes.

Look at the facial expression of the athlete.

- \*Does the athlete have a vacant stare or a confused facial expression?

Check the athlete's behavior.

- \*Is the athlete easily distracted or slow to answer questions or follow directions?
- \*Does the athlete display unusual emotional reactions, such as \*crying or laughing?
- \*Does the athlete have a headache or complain of nausea?
- \*Is the athlete irritable and easily frustrated?
- \*Does the athlete appear unusually anxious or depressed?
- \*Does the athlete appear sleepy?
- \*Does the athlete have significantly decreased playing ability from earlier in the contest?

Check the athlete's orientation and memory.

- \*Is the athlete aware of the time of day and date?
- \*Is the athlete generally confused? Questions to ask
- \*Which quarter or period is it?
- \*Where are we? Which field or arena?
- \*Which team are we playing?
- \*Which side scored the last points?
- \*Which team did the athlete play in the last game?
- \*Did the athlete's team win or lose in the last game?

Check for posttraumatic amnesia (the athlete's ability to remember events after the injury).

- \*Ask the athlete how he got injured?
- \*Ask the athlete the first thing he remembers after the injury?
- \*Ask the last thing the athlete remembers before the injury?

Medical attention is required if the athlete's expression, behavior, or memory is affected. Attention should be immediate if symptoms show a deteriorating situation. When an athlete has had a concussion, he should not be allowed to return to the current game or practice, and should not be left alone. Medical evaluation following the concussion is required before a return to participation is permitted.

**Postconcussion syndrome**

After a player is removed from the field, he may develop symptoms of postconcussion syndrome. This can occur immediately after the injury or many hours or days later. Symptoms of postconcussion syndrome include:

- \*Blurred vision
- \*Fatigue
- \*Ringing in the ears
- \*Trouble falling asleep
- \*Dizziness

- \*Sleeping more or less than usual
- \*Headache
- \*Increased sensitivity to light and noise
- \*Nausea and vomiting
- \*Feeling more emotional than normal
- \*Poor coordination or balance
- \*Difficulty concentrating
- \*Increased irritability
- \*Difficulty remembering
- \*Slurred speech
- \*Feeling dazed or stunned
- \*Seeing stars or flashing lights
- \*Having double vision.

A physician may conduct neuropsychological testing or neuroimaging to assess exactly when the athlete has recovered from a concussion. No athlete should go back to play before being free of all symptoms and signs, both at rest and during exertion, and a physician has indicated the player is ready to return to competition.



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## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Concussion Awareness

#### CDC, NFL unite national governing bodies of sport to teach young athletes about concussions

By Joe Frollo  
October 11, 2010, revised October 28, 2010

**Free poster available for download and distribution to all youth leagues**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the NFL and 14 national governing bodies of sport, including USA Football, are promoting a free poster designed to increase concussion awareness among young athletes, parents and coaches.

The poster, created by the NFL's Head, Neck and Spine Medical Committee, the CDC and the NFL Players Association, is similar to the one displayed in NFL locker rooms but geared toward a younger audience. It stresses the importance of recognizing a concussion, taking time to recover and not returning to play too soon. By walking through the steps to recognize if the athlete - or a teammate - has suffered a concussion, the goal is increased concussion awareness in all sports.



*Players, coaches and parents can better recognize concussion symptoms thanks to a poster being distributed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NFL, USA Football and other national governing bodies of sport.*

"The NFL understands its obligation to educate and inform parents, teachers, coaches and especially young athletes about the risks of concussions," NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said. "This poster is one element of the NFL's program to assist in the development and broad dissemination of reliable medical information on concussions, which will give players, parents, coaches and others the information they need."

The poster is available online for download and order at no cost at [CDC's website](#) or by calling (800) CDC-INFO. Information on recognizing and reacting to concussions also can be found at [usafootball.com](#) and through USA Football's [Put Pride Aside For Player Safety](#) program as well as through the following national governing bodies:

USA Football's [Certified Coaching Education Program](#), employed by youth football coaches in all 50 states, includes chapters on concussion awareness and management as well as hydration and proper equipment fitting. [Health and safety videos](#) also are available at USA Football's [Health and Safety](#) page.

"Having more than one dozen different sports be part of this initiative underscores the point that coaches, athletes and parents across all youth athletics need to be informed about this issue," USA Football Executive Director ScottHallenbeck said.

"USA Football has worked with the CDC on concussion education since 2007, and we will continue to emphasize it while teaching coaches and players proper football fundamentals for fun and safe play."

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[NFL and CDC create poster to educate young athletes about concussions](#)

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## HEALTH & SAFETY

### Concussion Awareness

#### Redskins and USA Football Welcome High School Coaches for Concussion Education

By Steve Alic  
April 23, 2010, revised April 29, 2010

The Washington Redskins and USA Football partnered for the Redskins' inaugural Concussion Awareness and Education Forum on April 17 at Redskins Park.

Redskins Park has a history of preparing football teams for success.

Successful preparation at the football training facility earned a new and vital definition on April 17 when the Washington Redskins and USA Football partnered for the Redskins' inaugural Concussion Awareness and Education Forum for Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. high school head football coaches.

Nearly 200 high school coaches traveled to Redskins Park as guests of the team to watch minicamp practice and participate in a 90-minute concussion education seminar led by USA Football's Peter Gonzalez, M.D.

Dr. Gonzalez is the director of the Eastern Virginia Medical School Sports Concussion Program in Norfolk, Va.

Redskins General Manager Bruce Allen opened the day by welcoming the coaches and introduced Dr. Gonzalez. Each coach received a USA Football/CDC concussion awareness [clipboard sticker](#) listing concussion signs, symptoms and an action plan. This same material is given to thousands of coaches who attend USA Football's full-day coaching schools across the country. [Concussion-related information](#) is available at no cost throughout [usafootball.com](#).

"The coaches asked good questions," Dr. Gonzalez said after the presentation. "The Redskins are to be commended - this was a great discussion and also was the largest group of high school coaches I've spoken to at any one time."

"I came to learn all I can," said Jason Meade, head football coach of Lee-Davis High School in Mechanicsville, Va., a two-hour drive from Redskins Park. Coach Meade enters his eighth season as head coach this fall. "Learning more when it comes to putting our players in a better, safer situation is important to us."

"We can't allow high school athletes who suffer concussions to return to play too soon," Dr. Gonzalez added. "If there's one thing a coach takes away from our session today, it's not allowing an athlete to return to play while still possessing the symptoms of a concussion."

"And if we even suspect someone to have suffered a concussion, there is no same-day return to play."

Concussion awareness and management is an important part of USA Football's online coaching education courses and its 80-plus training events held across the country for [players](#), [coaches](#) and [youth league commissioners](#).

USA Football is the official youth football development partner of the NFL, its 32 teams and the NFL Players Association. More than 60 of USA Football's events in 2010 are conducted in partnership with NFL clubs.



Dr. Peter Gonzalez, director of the Eastern Virginia Medical School Sports Concussion Program, spoke on behalf of USA Football regarding concussion awareness and management to 170 high school head football coaches at Redskins Park. The session was part of a full-day minicamp invitation that the Washington Redskins extended to high school coaches throughout Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. (Photo courtesy of Ned Dishman/Washington Redskins)



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For Immediate Release  
Tuesday, December 7, 2010

Contact: Jeff Miller  
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**NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE AND THE NATIONAL ATHLETIC TRAINERS' ASSOCIATION  
TEAM TO PASS STATE LAWS TO PROTECT YOUTH ATHLETES  
FROM THE RISKS OF CONCUSSIONS**

Washington, D.C., December 7, 2010 – The National Football League and the National Athletic Trainers' Association today announced a joint effort to promote legislation to raise awareness and protect youth athletes from the risks of concussions. The new partnership was announced during the Youth Sports Safety Summit in the nation's capital.

"We are pleased to team with the National Athletic Trainers' Association on a state-based legislative effort to protect youth athletes," said Jeff Miller, the NFL's vice president of government relations. "We will advance a simple, but significant shared goal -- to help prevent concussions and make sports and recreational activities safer for young athletes around the country."

The NFL and NATA have agreed to work together to pass concussion awareness and prevention laws in every state throughout the country. The league and the association will promote laws modeled on the Zackery Lystedt law in Washington State, which contains three key elements: (1) concussion education for young athletes, parents and coaches on an annual basis; (2) immediate removal of a student athlete who appears to have suffered a concussion from play or practice; and (3) mandatory clearance of that student by a health care professional who is trained in the evaluation and management of concussions before returning to play or practice.

Marjorie J. Albohm, MS, ATC, president of the National Athletic Trainers' Association added, "We know from recent cases and studies that far too many youth athletes are either playing with undiagnosed symptoms of concussions or returning to play before fully recovering from them. That's why our organization of trained health care professionals supports legislation in every state that will help coaches, youth athletes, their parents and school officials to recognize and respond appropriately to concussions. Doing so will help prevent injury, chronic impairment and even death."

-more-

The NFL and NATA also have pledged to encourage and enlist the participation of other stakeholders and advocates. Organizations already supporting the adoption of such laws include USA Football, the American College of Sports Medicine and the Brain Injury Association of Washington. To date, nine states have enacted adequate concussion awareness and prevention laws including Washington, Oregon, New Mexico, Virginia, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Connecticut and New Jersey.

**National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) – Health Care for Life & Sport**

Athletic trainers are health care professionals who specialize in the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of injuries and sport-related illnesses. They prevent and treat chronic musculoskeletal injuries from sports, physical and occupational activity, and provide immediate care for acute injuries. Athletic trainers offer a continuum of care that is unparalleled in health care. The National Athletic Trainers' Association represents and supports 32,000 members of the athletic training profession. Visit [www.nata.org](http://www.nata.org)

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