



What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, or TBI, caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a fall or a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. Health care professionals may describe a concussion as a “mild” brain injury because concussions are usually not life-threatening. Even so, their effects can be serious.

Why are Concussions becoming a big deal?

Concussions are injuries you can't see, nor do they have a defined “recovery” time, like sprained ankles and broken bones. Concussions are becoming a big deal as doctors learn more and more about the brain and how concussions can drastically alter a person's short and long term health if not cared for and treated properly. Unlike broken bones and sprained joints, brains cannot be casted up to heal, nor do you get the luxury of a second brain if you break your first one. This is why we have become increasingly aware of concussions and their impact on players, and why it will continue to be an important topic in youth sports. We need to take steps to minimize the number of concussions, and properly treat them when they do occur, as repeat concussions for young people can result in long term problems that could change their lives forever.

So what does this mean for the OPL?

In our program, coaches and referees are REQUIRED to remove the player and sit them out if there are signs of a concussion after a blow to the head or the body during trainings and games. The player may not participate again until, minimum, the next day. Furthermore, a coach cannot allow the player back on the field for training or games until the player no longer exhibits signs, symptoms or behavior consistent with a concussion, AND receives a medical release from a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussions. The most appropriate course of action always is for coaches and officials to err on the side of caution for the player's sake, and when in doubt to sit the player out, regardless of the player's capability or game conditions. After a player with a suspected concussion is removed from practice or play, the decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision, for the sake of the player's safety and long-term health.

Concussion symptoms differ with each person and with each injury, and they may not be noticeable for hours or days. Common symptoms include:

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

Headache
Confusion
Difficulty remembering or paying attention
Balance problems or dizziness
Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
Feeling irritable, more emotional, or “down”
Nausea or vomiting
Bothered by light or noise
Double or blurry vision
Slowed reaction time
Sleep problems
Loss of consciousness

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians

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

WHY SHOULD AN ATHLETE REPORT THEIR SYMPTOMS?

If an athlete has a concussion, his/her brain needs time to heal. While an athlete's brain is still healing, s/he is much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes to recover. In rare cases, repeat concussions in young athletes can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to their brain. They can even be fatal.

If an athlete reports one or more symptoms listed above after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, s/he should be kept out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says s/he is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.

PLAYERS: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU 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. **Remember, it's better to miss one game than the entire season.**

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.

PARENTS: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION?

If you suspect your child has a concussion, make sure the coach has removed the athlete from play to observe for symptoms. If concussion symptoms are observed and/or reported by the player, do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says s/he is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.

Remember, concussions affect people differently. While most athletes with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have symptoms that last for days, or even weeks. A more serious concussion can last for months or longer.

Rest is key to helping an athlete recover from a concussion. 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. After a concussion, returning to sports and school is a gradual process that should be carefully managed and monitored by a health care professional.

You can find more resources on concussions by visiting www.oregonpremierleague.com and checking out "Concussion Awareness" under the "Performance" link.

Player Signature (Age 12 and Above)

Player Name (Printed)

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Date