

## What about athletes who have had multiple concussions?

Athletes who have had one or more concussions may be more likely to have another and may also take longer to recover. There is increasing concern about the accumulated effects of multiple concussions. Because of this, return-to-play decisions for these athletes should only be made by qualified professionals.

## How can I prevent concussion?

There are several things that can be done to help reduce the risk of concussion. Proper enforcement of rules can help to prevent concussion by reducing risky or overly-aggressive play.

A properly worn helmet can reduce the risk of a serious brain injury or skull fracture but does not eliminate the risk of concussion. Helmets are required in sports such as football and men's lacrosse. Helmets should also be worn while bicycling, rollerblading, skateboarding, riding a scooter, skiing, snowboarding, or riding a horse. Additionally, steps can be taken to educate athletes, coaches, parents, referees, and others about the potentially serious problems that can follow a concussion, especially if the athlete returns to play too soon.



## Where can I get help or more information?

If you or someone you know has experienced a concussion and you are looking for medical help, or if you are looking for more information about sports concussion, contact the **Upstate Sports Concussion Program** at **315-464-8986**.

**Program Director, Brian P. Rieger, PhD**  
**Medical Director, Claudine Ward, MD**

**UPSTATE**  
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

*Concussion Center*

## UPSTATE SPORTS CONCUSSION PROGRAM

Institute for Human Performance | 505 Irving Ave | Syracuse, NY  
315.464.8986 | [www.upstate.edu/concussion](http://www.upstate.edu/concussion)

# SPORTS CONCUSSION

IT'S MORE THAN JUST A BUMP  
ON THE HEAD



**UPSTATE**  
UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

*Concussion Center*



# SPORTS CONCUSSION

## IT'S MORE THAN JUST A BUMP ON THE HEAD

### What is a concussion?

A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by a blow or a jolt to the head.

### How do I recognize a concussion when it occurs?

Concussion temporarily alters an athlete's mental and physical abilities. Some athletes lose consciousness after concussion, but most do not. Symptoms may appear right away or may not be noticed until the next day or later. Athletes may sometimes downplay or minimize their symptoms so they are not kept out of sports. The most common symptoms of concussion include the following:

#### Physical symptoms

- headache
- nausea and vomiting
- dizziness, light-headedness, and a loss of balance
- blurred vision or sensitivity to light
- fatigue and lack of energy
- sleep problems including sleeping too much or waking up a lot

#### Mental symptoms

- feeling "dazed" or "foggy" or easily confused
- trouble remembering things
- difficulty concentrating and paying attention
- trouble doing more than one thing at a time
- feeling less organized and losing track of things
- slowed thinking or speech

#### Behavioral symptoms

- mood changes including irritability, anxiousness, and tearfulness
- decreased motivation
- easily overwhelmed
- saying or doing something without thinking it through
- withdrawing and wanting to avoid social situations
- personality changes

### How long does it take to recover?

Most athletes recover from a concussion in a few days or weeks, but symptoms may last for months. Recovery may be slower in those who have already had one or more concussions and in those who have a history of other medical problems.

### When is it safe to return to play after concussion?

- An athlete who has sustained a concussion should be removed from play **immediately** and undergo medical evaluation.
- An athlete can return to play when he or she is **completely symptom-free** at rest and with exertion.
- The decision to return an athlete to play after suspected concussion should only be made by a qualified professional.
- ***When in doubt, sit them out!***

### How can you tell when an athlete is symptom-free?

Concussion is an invisible injury and athletes may not



recognize or may minimize post-concussion symptoms. Also, symptoms may appear to go away, only to come back after physical or mental exertion. Because of this, current guidelines indicate that the athlete must be symptom-free both at rest and with exertion. Testing of the athlete's balance and mental abilities can help to determine when he or she is symptom-free.

### What if the symptoms don't go away in a week or two?

As noted above, post-concussion symptoms can last hours, days, weeks, or longer. Regardless of how long symptoms last, an athlete can get help from medical professionals who are trained in the evaluation and treatment of concussion. Physicians, psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and others can help the athlete understand and manage the symptoms.

Returning to sports is often the main concern of the athlete, but post-concussion symptoms can also affect many other day-to-day activities, particularly academic performance. The medical professionals treating the athlete with post-concussion symptoms will often recommend academic accommodations to assist with school performance during recovery.