



Talking to parents about **concussion**

A guide for youth coaches, league organizers, sports officials, and others supporting teen athletes



Sports are a great way for young people to have fun, stay healthy, and build life skills. They can also put youth at risk for concussion when hits to the head and body, falls, and collisions happen. A concussion is a serious injury that can affect the short and long-term health of children and teens. But play doesn't have to end in injury when athletes, parents, and sports teams work together to prioritize concussion safety and prevention. Helping parents learn about what concussions are, why they're serious, and what to do if they happen can go a long way in keeping youth safe and strong to play for life. Athletes can thrive when parents talk with them about concussion.

Athletes can thrive when parents talk with them about concussion. You have an **important role** to play in helping to ensure parents and athletes understand why concussion safety is important.

Here are 3 things you can do to help them understand why they should prioritize concussion safety and prevention.

What you can do

1

Help parents understand, spot, and respond to a possible concussion.

- Remind parents that a concussion can be a serious brain injury that may affect how a person thinks, learns, and acts. This injury can also lead to problems with sleep.
- Someone may not look injured, but their brain could be. A concussion can happen during sports practice or games, as well as things like a fall at home, or a bike or car crash. So, it's important for parents to know concussion signs, symptoms, and danger signs — and to follow up with a healthcare provider if parents notice any of them.
- Tell parents of student athletes that coaches or sports officials should notify them if they suspect that their teen got a concussion while playing sports. Parents should ask coaches or sports officials for details about the injury, such as how the injury happened and any symptoms. They can then provide this information to their teen's healthcare provider.

2

Help parents understand that concussions can be prevented, as well as how to talk to youth about concussion safety.

- Encourage parents to ensure their teen has safe places to play, good safety rules to follow, and gear to protect their head if it's appropriate for the sport.¹
- Let parents know that there are actions sports programs can take, such as enforcing safety rules and limiting collisions, to lower an athlete's chance of getting a concussion or other serious injury.
- Remind parents to talk to youth about why a head injury is serious and what to do if it happens. This includes reporting it to coaches, athletic trainers, or other trusted adults.

3

Help parents understand timelines for returning to usual activities.

- Most youth can return to school and other non-sports-related activities within a few days of the injury.
- Let parents know that most people have a good recovery and return to sports participation, but there is no set timeline on return to sports. Make parents aware that returning to sports is a gradual step-by-step process. Getting back to sports requires permission from a healthcare provider.²

³Parent conversation tips

Keep it brief.

- Parents are busy. Focus on the most important things they need to know to keep their teen safe — including prevention, signs and symptoms, and concussion reporting. Use this fact sheet to help you communicate these key points quickly.

Keep it engaging.

- Share real-life stories about the importance of recognizing and responding to concussion. Create a two-way dialogue by encouraging parents to share their concerns at events they are likely to attend, like parent meetings after a practice.

Include a call to action.

- Help parents know where to get more information. Direct them to parent-focused resources like [CDC's HEADS UP website](#). They can learn more about concussion causes, effects, and outcomes through videos, fact sheets, and more. Encourage them to attend concussion safety workshops or meetings in the community.
- Inform parents that young people learning safety behaviors early means a lifetime of practice and prevention as they grow.

