

# Concussion Facts

## Parents & Guardians



### What is a concussion?

When an athlete gets their “bell rung” or gets “lit up” they have suffered a concussion. Concussions are a type of *traumatic brain injury (TBI)*. When a child or adolescent sustains a concussion, their brain may bounce or twist inside the skull, sometimes stretching or damaging brain cells and causing chemical changes within the brain. This movement interrupts the brain’s functioning and can impact your child physically, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally.



### How do concussions happen?

Concussions are caused by a bump, blow, hit, or jolt to the head or body that moves the head and brain rapidly back and forth. Common causes are falls and being hit against or by another person or object. Your child’s head does not have to be struck to cause a concussion — a body-to-body hit has the potential to cause a concussion.



### Can concussion risk be reduced?

**YES!** There are ways to reduce your child’s risk of a concussion. Talk to your child about practicing good sportsmanship and following coaches’ instructions for safe game play. Make sure bicycle, athletic, and ATV helmets fit properly and are worn consistently. While a helmet doesn’t prevent a concussion, it does protect your child’s head from more severe head injuries. Make sure your child’s school and sports organizations have established concussion policies and protocols; they should have procedures in place for coach training and returning to learn and play after a concussion.



### Can my child keep playing after a concussion?

The brain needs time to heal after a concussion. An athlete who *continues to play* or who *returns to play too soon* — before the brain has finished healing — has a greater chance of getting another concussion. **A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing can be very serious and can affect a child for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.** If you suspect your child has sustained a concussion during a practice or a game, make sure they are **immediately** removed from play. Do **not** allow your child to return to play on the same day as the injury.