Recognize a Sports Concussion

Organized sports teach children and adolescents how to work as a team, develop leadership, earn respect, learn discipline and stay active. Unfortunately, injury also comes with the territory. If an athlete is suspected to have a possible concussion—it’s time to get off the field.

What is a Concussion?
A concussion is a traumatic brain injury resulting from a direct hit or force to the head or neck that causes the brain to move back and forth in the skull. According to the Center for Disease Control, contact sports are second, only to vehicle accidents, as the leading cause of traumatic brain injury among individuals 15-24.

Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion
Concussions may be mild to severe, but all need to be treated by a medical professional. A common myth is that a person needs to fall unconscious or “black out” in order to have a concussion. The following are signs and symptoms of a concussion:

- Headache
- Memory loss
- Behavior change
- Delayed physical responses
- Slurred or unclear speech
- Empty stare
- Blurred vision
- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Sleepy or sleep problems

Prevention of Concussions
The best defense against sustaining a sports-related concussion is to make sure your child:

- Understands the rules of the game
- Learns proper training techniques
- Plays with children his/her age, size and development level

“If a child does sustain a head injury during play, the state law mandates that the child be removed from play and evaluated by a medical professional,” said Winslow Borkowski, M.D., Pediatric Neurologist at Boys Town National Research Hospital.
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“Parents need to communicate and cooperate with coaches on evaluating and treating their child following a head injury,” said Dr. Borkowski. “If you or the coaching staff feel that your child has received any injury that should be medically evaluated, please seek appropriate care.”

Nebraska Law Regarding Concussions
Nebraska signed a Concussion Safety Law (LB 260), in July 2012, requiring schools to offer trainings to coaches on how to recognize the symptoms and to seek proper medical treatment for a concussion or brain injury. The law also requires immediate removal from the practice or game if the athlete is suspected to have a concussion or brain injury. In order to return to play, the athlete must be cleared by a licensed medical professional.

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