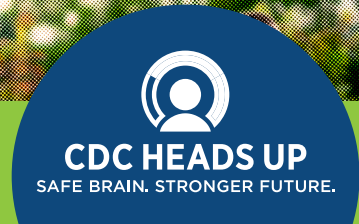




# Concussion Q&A: What Parents Need to Know



You might already know about concussions and how they can affect young people’s health. But scientists are learning more about concussion effects in youth. Knowing the latest information can help keep your child or teen safe.

**Here’s where you can get the facts on questions you might have about concussion prevention, diagnosis, and recovery.**

## Prevention

**Question:**

Will there be people present at my child or teen’s sports practice or game that will know what to do after a possible concussion?

**Answer:**

Unfortunately, many athletes do not have access to an athletic trainer or other healthcare professional at all practices and games. And even if a coach has been trained to spot signs and symptoms of a concussion, they may miss a possible concussion if an athlete doesn’t speak up or tries to hide the injury. That’s why it’s important for you to ask about your sports program’s policy. Learn whether their team has access to athletic trainers. Know how to keep an eye out for concussion symptoms if a coach reports your child or teen got a head hit at a practice or game.

**Question:**

If my child or teen doesn’t play sports, do I need to be concerned about a concussion?

**Answer:**

Yes. It’s easy to think that concussions only happen during sports. But research shows that recreational activities like bicycling, playground activity, driving all-terrain vehicles (ATV), skateboarding, and horseback riding can all put young people at risk for concussion. Concussions can also happen from things like a fall at home, a car crash, or being hit or physically harmed.

## Diagnosis

**Question:**

Does my child or teen need a brain scan if they get a concussion?

**Answer:**

Most children will not need to get a scan of their brain (CT or MRI scan) after a concussion. Instead, a doctor will use other tests or examinations to diagnose a person with concussion. These tests mostly focus on concussion symptoms a person is experiencing.

**Question:**

Is it true that I need to wake my child or teen from sleep every few hours after their concussion?

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**Answer:**

No. You can let them sleep uninterrupted after a concussion. This is especially common within the first 24 hours of the injury. As long as your child or teen isn't experiencing [danger signs of concussion](#), it's okay to let them sleep as much as they need right after the injury to help their brain heal. But don't make them sleep or stay in a dark room all day. When they are awake, encourage relaxing activities like reading and taking short walks outside.

**Question:**

How long should my child or teen wait until getting back to regular activities?

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**Answer:**

Most children can return to school within 1 to 2 days of a concussion. They should also ease back into physical exercise (like walks or light jogging) and social activities, even if they still have some mild symptoms. Doing light physical activity after a concussion can actually help recovery. Cut back on that activity if symptoms worsen. Be sure to get medical clearance before restarting any activity that puts them at risk for another head or brain injury, like sports and riding a bike.

**Question:**

Can my child or teen return to sports on the same day they experienced a possible concussion if they say they're feeling better?

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**Answer:**

No. Returning to sports is a multi-step process that can take a week or more to complete, unlike the 1-2 day return to activity process. Once an athlete is removed from sports for a possible concussion, they shouldn't return to that activity the same day, and should wait until a healthcare provider says it's okay. Remember: feeling okay doesn't mean they are okay. Returning too early can increase risk of repeat concussions and longer-lasting symptoms.

**Question:**

If my child or teen gets one concussion, how likely are they to get another one?

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**Answer:**

Getting one concussion may make it easier for a person to get another one, and people can get multiple concussions throughout their life. Repeat concussions can lead to more severe symptoms and a longer recovery. The good news is that most young people with concussions get better over time. Doctors have treatments to help.

**Question:**

Does a concussion lead to any other health effects?

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**Answer:**

Yes. Concussions can affect how young people think, learn, feel, act, and sleep. Mental health problems and behavior changes like sadness, depression, and anxiety may also show up after a concussion. Give your child or teen time to stay connected to friends, and listen and talk with them to give support and encouragement. Having support from family and friends can help with recovery.

We're learning a lot more about concussions over time and their potential long-term effects on the brain. It's normal to feel anxious or uncertain if your child may have experienced one. You can play an active role by learning the signs to watch out for, knowing what treatments you can do at home, and getting your child or teen checked by a healthcare provider. They have treatments to support recovery. Together, you can help your child or teen live a full and healthy life. [CDC is here to help you learn about what to do after a possible concussion or other head injury.](#)

