

Be Honest

Encourage your athlete to be honest with you, his/her coach and your health care provider about his/her symptoms. Many young athletes get caught up in the moment and/or feel pressured to return to sports before they are ready. It is better to miss practice or meets than the entire season... or risk permanent damage!

Seek Medical Attention Right Away

Seeking medical attention on the day of the event is an important first step if you suspect or are told your swimmer has a concussion. A qualified health care professional will be able to determine how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports and other daily activities:

- No athlete should return to activity on the same day he/she gets a concussion
- No athlete may return to training, regardless of sport, until he/she is cleared by a health care professional with a note specifying clearance. Athletes should NEVER return to the pool if they still have ANY symptoms..... in case an athlete returns with a note and then during the practice complains of a headache or other symptoms
- Parents and coaches should never pressure any athlete to return to play

The Dangers of Returning Too Soon

Returning to the pool too early may cause Second Impact Syndrome (SIS) or Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS). SIS occurs when a second blow to the head happens before an athlete has completely recovered from a concussion. This second impact causes the brain to swell, possibly resulting in brain damage, paralysis, and even death. PCS can occur after a second impact. PCS can result in permanent, long-term concussion symptoms. The risk of SIS and PCS is the reason why no athlete should be allowed to participate in any physical activity before they are cleared by a qualified health care professional.

Recovery

A concussion can affect school, work, and sports. Along with coaches and teachers, the school nurse, athletic trainer, employer, and other school administrators should be aware of the athlete's injury and their roles in helping the child recover. During the recovery time after a concussion, physical and mental rest is required. A concussion upsets the way the brain normally works and causes it to work longer and harder to complete even simple tasks. Activities that require concentration and focus may make symptoms worse and cause the brain to heal slower. Studies show that children's brains take several weeks to heal following a concussion.

Returning to Daily Activities

1. Be sure your child gets plenty of rest and enough sleep at night – no late nights. Keep the same bedtime weekdays and weekends.
2. Encourage daytime naps or rest breaks when your child feels tired or worn-out.
3. Limit your child's activities that require a lot of thinking or concentration (including social activities, homework, video games, texting, computer, driving, job-related activities, movies, parties). These activities can slow the brain's recovery.
4. Limit your child's physical activity, especially those activities where another injury or blow to the head may occur.
5. Have your qualified health care professional check your child's symptoms at different times to help guide recovery.