🧠 CONCUSSIONS IN CHILDREN & YOUNG ATHLETES

A parent's and coach's guide to recognizing concussion and safe return to activities

💙 1. How can parents recognize a concussion when their child hasn't lost consciousness?

A child does NOT need to lose consciousness to have a concussion.

A hit to the head or body, collision, or fall can cause the brain to move inside the skull.

Watch for:

- **Thinking:** Confusion, forgetfulness, or difficulty concentrating.
- **Physical symptoms:** Headaches, dizziness, nausea, or sensitivity to light and noise.
- **Behaviour:** Irritability, unusual emotions, or seeming unlike themselves.
- **Sleep and balance:** Changes in sleeping, unsteadiness, or clumsiness.

Younger children may show changes in eating, sleeping, playing, or behaviour.

Remember: Symptoms may appear immediately or hours or days later.

💚 2. When is it safe to return to school, sports, and physical activity?

Return should be gradual and guided by symptoms and healthcare advice.

- **School:** Most children can return within 1–2 days, with breaks or reduced workloads if needed.
- **Physical activity:** Light walking and everyday movement can begin early if tolerated.
- **Sports:** Contact and collision activities require a graduated return-to-sport process and medical clearance.

Important: Never allow an athlete with a suspected concussion to return to play on the same day.

💜 3. What should parents and coaches watch for?

Children may hide symptoms because they want to keep playing.

Watch for:

- Appearing dazed, confused, or unsteady.
- Headaches, nausea, or unusual tiredness.
- Difficulty concentrating at school.
- Unusual irritability or emotional changes.
- Changes in sleeping habits.

Parents and coaches should communicate. Symptoms may become noticeable hours after a game or practice.

💔 4. What should you do if you suspect a concussion?

1. Remove the child from play immediately.
2. Do not allow them to return that day.
3. Arrange assessment by a healthcare professional.
4. Monitor symptoms and communicate with parents, coaches, and teachers.

🚨 **Emergency warning signs:** Worsening headache, repeated vomiting, seizures, increasing confusion, weakness, slurred speech, or difficulty waking. Seek emergency medical attention or call 911.

🌟 THE BIG TAKEAWAYS

- A child does not need to lose consciousness to have a concussion.
- Symptoms can be delayed or difficult to recognize.
- Never return to play on the same day as a suspected concussion.
- Returning to school and sports are different processes.
- Medical clearance is needed before returning to contact and collision sports.

WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT!

📚 LEARN MORE

1. **Parachute Canada – Concussion Guidelines:** https://parachute.ca/en/professional-resource/concussion-collection/canadian-guideline-on-concussion-in-sport/
2. **Canadian Paediatric Society – Sport-Related Concussion:** https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/safety-and-injury-prevention/sport_related_concussion
3. **CDC HEADS UP – Concussion Symptoms:** https://www.cdc.gov/heads-up/signs-symptoms/index.html

Educational resource only. Seek professional medical assessment for suspected concussion.