Head Injury Awareness

Classified as a contact sport by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Soccer has become a focal point for questions about repetitive head trauma. It is suggested that the deliberate use of ‘heading’ (direct head to ball contact) resembles the same trauma as repetitive blows to the head in sports such as boxing.

A concussion is an injury that changes how the brain normally functions. Caused by a blow to the head or body, the brain moves rapidly inside the skulls causing injury.

Females playing high school soccer suffer concussions **68% MORE often than males** playing the same sport.

If you suspect your child has experienced a concussion, even mild, it is highly advisable to him/her be examined by a physician right away. Before progressing to any significant level of physical exertion following a sports-related concussion, the athlete should report being symptom free at rest for at least 48 hours. In all cases you should follow the advice of your physician.

Signs and symptoms:

* Headaches
* Nausea or vomiting
* Balance problems or dizziness
* Double vision or blurred vision as well as possible sensitivity to light and noise
* Feeling sluggish or hazy
* Memory problems and/or confusion

Things parents should watch out for:

* The child loses consciousness
* The child appears dazed or stunned
* The child appears confused about assignment or position and may answer questions slowly
* The child shows memory problems
* The child experiences behavioral changes

A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage, and even death. Remember, all concussions are serious and can occur without loss of consciousness. Recognition and proper management of concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury.

The best protection against concussion is prevention by limiting head to ball contact in practice and play. We want our athletes to have fun, but also to be safe. Play smart – stay smart.

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