

NURSES CORNER

While Playing, Think Sports Safety



Now that warmer weather is here, I see more and more children out playing. While this is good for their health, injuries increase when children are in motion.

Why do we need to worry about safety?

According to George Washington University, 3.5 million children under 14 y.o. experience sports related injuries each year. The American Academy of Pediatrics says that children under 15 y.o. experience 60 % of skateboard injuries annually with 1500 children being hospitalized each year.

What can we do about safety without stifling our children's activity?

1. Children should have a sports physical before they engage in organized sports. Their doctor will assess if they have health issues related to activity that should be considered during play.
2. Children also need to find sports that they enjoy. Not all children excel at all sports. Some children prefer to compete with themselves not others. Other children prefer individual competition more than the usual team sports. The emphasis should be on being active and learning new skills, not necessarily on a specific sport or activity. Not all activities are appropriate for all children or ages. Young children have a higher center of gravity, poorer coordination, and slower reaction time. This makes them more likely to experience injuries. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children 5 y.o. and younger should never be on a skateboard and children between 6-10 years old should be closely supervised.
3. Most sports related injuries happen during practice, not during games. So safety rules need to be enforced at both practice and game time by a supervising adult. This includes having children playing with others of similar size, skill level, and developmental level. They also need to stay hydrated by drinking about 1 cup of fluid every 15-20 minutes during strenuous physical

activity.

4. Safety gear is sports specific. In football a specific type of helmet and padding system is used to protect from injuries due to the type of impact encountered in the sport. Baseball requires a batting helmet, and soccer players use shin guards. Even though children bike and skateboard on an individual basis, these are also sports that require special safety equipment.

When skateboarding an ASTM F1492 rated helmet should be worn. It is built to hold up under multiple impacts. Skateboarding and inline skating also requires the use of wrist guards, elbow, and knee pads to protect these areas from breaks and abrasions. For biking a CPSC rated helmet is needed. It is meant for a single hard impact and should be replaced after an impact or if cracking is noted. Padded gloves are also used to protect the palms from abrasions and impact to the arms when going over bumps.

Dual rated helmets that are both ASTM and CPSC rated are an excellent choice if you are going to both bike and skate. Be sure to look on the box for the ratings because looks can be deceiving.

5. Play areas need to be dry with a surface that helps players get good traction. Play structures should not be too high and surfaces under them should be resilient. All equipment such as bats, balls, bicycles, and skates should be examined to make sure they are in good working order before each use.

Working together, communities can help their children to stay healthy, active, and safe whatever sport they decide to play.



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A Fact Sheet for PARENTS

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump or blow to the head. Even a "ding," "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians

If your child has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from concussion.

- Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION?

- 1. Seek medical attention right away.** A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports.
- 2. Keep your child out of play.** Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play until a health care professional says it's OK. Children who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting your child for a lifetime.
- 3. Tell your child's coach about any recent concussion.** Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in ANY sport. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell the coach.

It's better to miss one game than the whole season.