



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Watch Your Head

Nonfatal Traumatic Brain Injuries from Sports and Recreation Activities among Persons aged ≤ 19 Years — United States, 2001–2009

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Participating in sports can help a young person develop physically, socially, and mentally, but it also increases the chance for injuries, particularly to the head.

Dr. Lisa McGuire is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss ways to prevent and recognize traumatic brain injuries incurred during sports and recreational activities. Welcome to the show, Lisa.

[Dr. McGuire] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lisa, what do we mean by a traumatic brain injury? Is that the same as a concussion?

[Dr. McGuire] Yes. A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury. A traumatic brain injury is something that changes the way that the brain normally works. It can be caused by a bump, a blow or jolt to the head, or even a penetrating brain injury. Traumatic brain injuries can range from mild to severe. Typically, concussions are those traumatic brain injuries that are less severe.

[Dr. Gaynes] How common are concussions in sports and recreational activities?

[Dr. McGuire] Concussions are common. Each year, 200,000 children and adolescents up to the age of 19 are treated in emergency departments for sports-related concussions. This is an increase of 60 percent over previous estimates.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the top three activities that have the highest rates of such injuries?

[Dr. McGuire] Bicycling, football, and playground activities have the highest rates of concussion.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lisa, what are the symptoms of a concussion that a coach or a parent should notice?

[Dr. McGuire] They might notice that the child could appear to be dazed, confused, or stunned. They might have questions about their assignment or their position that they normally play during the activity. They could also be unsure of the game that they're playing, the score of the game, or even who their opponent is. Sometimes you might even notice the athlete or the child might move in a more clumsy way than they normally do and sometimes there can even be a loss

of consciousness. It's not uncommon for the child to not be able to remember events prior or after the injury.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some symptoms the athlete might notice?

[Dr. McGuire] The athlete might say that they have a headache or pressure in the head or even nausea. They might show signs of dizziness issues or problems with their balance. They might also say that they have blurry vision, sensitivity to light or noise, and the student athlete might even just say that they don't feel quite right.

[Dr. Gaynes] What should a parent or coach do if they suspect that a child has suffered a concussion?

[Dr. McGuire] If a concussion is suspected, the athlete should be removed from the activity immediately. They should not return to the activity the day of the injury and they should not return to play or practice until they have been cleared by a health care professional that is skilled in evaluating concussions.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lisa, what are some strategies for preventing concussions?

[Dr. McGuire] To minimize a child's risk of a concussion in a sports or recreational activity, they should wear protective equipment that is appropriate for that specific activity and their position. The equipment needs to fit correctly, be well-maintained, and they need to wear it consistently and correctly. Also, coaching needs to occur in appropriate, sport-specific skills that emphasize safe practices and good techniques. Also, the child needs to be able to adhere to the rules of play with good sportsmanship, and during competition, there should be strict officiating with respect to sportsmanship. Additionally, there should be attention to strength and conditioning of the athlete.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about preventing and recognizing concussions?

[Dr. McGuire] More information is available at www.cdc.gov/concussion.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Lisa. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Lisa McGuire about preventing and recognizing concussions incurred during sports and recreational activities.

Symptoms of a concussion can include confusion, dizziness, headache, nausea, and sometimes loss of consciousness. If a concussion is suspected, the person should be removed from the activity immediately and not return until cleared by a health care professional who has experience evaluating concussions.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.