



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Getting Your Bell Rung

Brain Injury Awareness Month — March 2010

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[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.

Injuries are common if you participate in sports, but some athletic injuries are more serious than others. A concussion is a brain injury that's caused by a blow or jolt to the head. In many cases, they are not easily or immediately recognized.

Dr. Lisa McGuire is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of recognizing and treating concussions in athletes. Welcome to the show, Lisa.

[Dr. McGuire] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lisa, in what sports are athletes most likely to suffer a concussion?

[Dr. McGuire] Students and children can suffer a concussion in any sport or recreational activities. We see that most of the ER visits for children between the ages of 5 and 18 years old for concussions are related to bike accidents, football, baseball, playground incidents, and soccer.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are the symptoms of a concussion?

[Dr. McGuire] The signs and symptoms of a concussion can be slightly different, depending on whose perspective you're looking at. From an athlete's, a student athlete's perspective, the symptoms can be things such as a headache, nausea or vomiting, some issues with dizziness – feeling dizzy, sensitivity to light or noise. For coaches, they might notice things such as the student appearing dazed or confused, especially about things such as the assignment or their position; forgetting plays or being unsure of the game, the score, or the opponent. Parents might notice that the student is moving more clumsily than normal, answering questions more slowly than normal, a loss of consciousness, and behavioral or personality changes.

[Dr. Gaynes] If an athlete has symptoms of a concussion, what should they do?

[Dr. McGuire] The first thing an athlete should do is they should report it to either their parent or their coach, depending on who they're with. Coaches, we suggest, should follow four steps. They first should remove an athlete from the play. Second, we suggest that the student athlete be evaluated by a healthcare professional that has experience in evaluating concussions. Third, the parent should be informed, if they're not already aware, that the student may have a concussion and be given materials regarding concussions. And fourth, the student should stay out of play or

stay out of the game until they are symptom-free and a healthcare professional says it's okay for them to return.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lisa, how long does it usually take for a person to recover from a concussion?

[Dr. McGuire] Most people recover fully from a concussion. The signs and symptoms can last for several days, weeks, or even longer, and how long the symptoms will last depends on the severity of the concussion and the incident, but it's important to note that the student athlete should wait until a healthcare provider says it's okay for them to return to play.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lisa, we've been talking about athletes with a single concussion. What are the consequences of multiple concussions?

[Dr. McGuire] Students that have had a concussion are at a higher risk for future ones. Repeat concussions can be very serious; they can result in permanent brain damage that can affect the child for the rest of their lives.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about sports-related concussions?

[Dr. McGuire] More information is available at www.cdc.gov/concussion. There's material available for parents, athletes, and coaches.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Lisa. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Lisa McGuire about the importance of recognizing and appropriately treating concussions in athletes.

Parents, coaches and trainers should be familiar with the symptoms of a concussion and require that injured athletes refrain from participating in athletic activities until they have completely recovered.

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, 24/7.