

Concussion and Your Young Athlete

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One topic that has received a lot of attention in the press lately is the growing concern about concussions among young athletes. While it is true that those athletes playing football are at risk of having a concussion, anyone is susceptible to this injury. In the United States alone, emergency rooms see approximately 180,000 sports-related concussion patients each year with the overall estimate of sports-related concussions between 1.6 to 3.8 million.¹ Many more go unreported, or worse yet, not even recognized.

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that changes the way the brain functions. A concussion can occur when a traumatic bump, blow, or jolt to the head or to the body results in rapid whipping movement of the head. The injured person does not have to lose consciousness for a concussion to occur. If your child or athlete has had such a blow to the head or body, he or she should be monitored for any change in behavior, thinking, or physical performance and evaluated by a professional health care provider trained in concussion care. Most people who have had a concussion will experience a quick and full recovery. For others, however, the signs and symptoms of a concussion may last for days, weeks or longer.

Some common signs to watch for if you suspect a concussion may have occurred are: appearing dazed, confused or stunned; forgetting instructions; moving clumsily; answering questions slowly; any loss of consciousness; having mood and/or behavior changes; and having trouble remembering events prior to or after the injury. A person with a concussion may complain of having a headache or “pressure” in his or her head, be nauseous or have vomiting, have balance problems or complain of dizziness, have blurred or double vision or may be sensitive to light or noise. He or she may also feel sluggish or groggy and have memory problems.

If your child or athlete has received a suspected or actual concussion, they should be removed from play immediately. Even if you are unsure, the safety of the child is paramount. As soon as possible, have your child evaluated by a health care professional trained in the care of concussions. Do not make the mistake of evaluating the severity of this brain trauma yourself. Health care professionals have a number of options they can use to evaluate the severity of concussions. Keep the child out of play until they are free of symptoms and the health care professional trained in concussion management has cleared them to return.

WHAT CAN CHIROPRACTIC DO?

As mentioned above, a concussion may occur when there is a traumatic blow to the head, neck or body. This traumatic blow can cause a whiplash-type of injury to the neck. Whiplash is a common term for a

sprain/strain injury or tearing to the muscles, tendons and ligaments (referred to as ‘soft tissue’) of the neck. This type of injury is also likely to cause a loss of normal function in the spine. If not properly evaluated and treated, these injuries can have life-long, devastating effects.

The ‘Blair’ Upper Cervical Chiropractic Technique uses a specific analytical approach to the evaluation and treatment of the neck. The chiropractor trained in the Blair technique will use specific examinations to evaluate not only the soft tissue of the neck, but also the alignment of the spine and function of the nervous system. The precise X-rays that are used in the Blair technique give an up-close and detailed image of all articulating joints in the neck for a precise biomechanical evaluation of the cervical spine. This evaluation allows the ‘Blair’ chiropractor to guide the non-rotational spinal adjustment, as well as reduce the force used to a minimum.

Recent studies have found that the chiropractic adjustment of the cervical spine increases the performance of the nervous system.² It is also important to know that a spine which is not aligned properly, or has what chiropractors term as a subluxation (segmental spinal dysfunction), does not always produce pain or symptoms, but still impair the function of the body.

When a traumatic injury occurs to your athlete or child, not only is it important to have them evaluated and treated by a health care professional trained in concussion management, but also one who is trained in the care of the cervical spine, such as a Blair chiropractor.

For more information about the Blair Chiropractic Technique and what to expect from a Blair chiropractor, go to: <http://www.blairchiropractic.com>

For more information on concussions, go to www.cdc.gov/concussion/index.html.

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1. Cameron M. Marshall, BA, DC. Sports-related concussion: A narrative review of the literature. JCCA 2012; 56(4):299-310
2. Heidi Haavik Taylor, PhD, BSc(Chiro), and Bernadette Murphy, PhD, DC. The effects of spinal manipulation on central integration of dual somatosensory input observed after motor training: A crossover study. J Manipulative Physiol Ther 2010;33:261-272