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For more information, call the Saint Francis Medical Center Concussion Clinic at 573-339-4544.

  
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» CONCUSSION RESOURCE GUIDE  
for coaches, athletes and parents

  
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# »» THE CONCUSSION DISCUSSION:

## Facing the facts about traumatic brain injury

Concussions are serious business for young athletes. As the prevalence of these traumatic brain injuries continues to rise, it is more important than ever for coaches, players and parents to stay alert for symptoms and have a solid game plan for prompt, appropriate response. Knowing the warning signs and taking fast action could minimize damage and speed recovery.

### »» WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury caused by a blow to the head—affecting the way the brain functions. Left untreated, a concussion can pose serious health risks, even death.

Most people recover from a concussion quickly and fully. However, symptoms may last for days, weeks or longer. In general, recovery may be slower among older adults, young children and teens. Those who have had a concussion in the past are at risk of having another one, and they may also find that it takes longer to recover after a subsequent concussion.

### »» STAY ALERT FOR SYMPTOMS

Watch for these common concussion symptoms:

- Low-grade headache
- Difficulty remembering, paying attention, organizing or making decisions
- Slowed thinking, acting, speaking or reading
- Easily confused
- Neck pain
- Feeling tired or having low energy
- Trouble sleeping
- Dizziness, loss of balance or light-headedness
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Blurred vision or eye fatigue
- Loss of taste or smell
- Ringing in the ears
- Mood or personality changes

### »» WHEN IN DOUBT, CHECK IT OUT

Anyone who suffers a concussion should seek care from a health care professional. Even if you are not sure a concussion has occurred, have the injury assessed. Getting help soon after the injury by trained specialists brings you the best odds for a full, fast recovery.

### »» DANGER SIGNS: YOUR LIFE MAY BE ON THE LINE

The following symptoms may indicate a life-threatening injury and require immediate emergency attention:

- A headache that gets worse or does not go away
- Weakness, numbness or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Extreme drowsiness or difficulty being awakened
- One pupil larger than the other
- Convulsions or seizures
- Problems recognizing people or places
- Increasing confusion or agitation
- Loss of consciousness

### »» PLAY IT SAFE: TAKING TIME TO RECOVER

Saint Francis Medical Center recommends the following guidelines for sports-related concussion management:

- No athlete should return to play on the same day of a concussion.
- Any athlete removed from play because of a concussion should have medical clearance from an appropriate healthcare professional before resuming practice or competition.
- A responsible adult should observe the player for a few hours after the injury.
- After medical clearance, the athlete should follow a step-by-step protocol for re-entry to play with provisions for the return of any symptoms.

### »» CONCUSSION CLINIC GIVES PATIENTS A HEAD START ON RECOVERY

Saint Francis Medical Center offers a Concussion Clinic with specialized resources for early follow up and condition management of concussions. Led by Heidi J. Hunter, MD, and Andrew Godbey, MD, MPH, the Concussion Clinic assists with:

- Symptom management
- School or work re-entry
- Return to sports participation

### »» LOCATION

**Patients are seen by appointment only.**

Cape Neurology Specialists  
3004 Gordonville Road  
Cape Girardeau, Mo.

### »» FAST FACTS

- A concussion is a brain injury.
- All concussions are serious and warrant assessment by a health professional.
- Most people who suffer a concussion do not lose consciousness.
- Recognizing and responding to symptoms of concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

### »» WHO IS AT RISK?

Concussions can occur during practice or competition in any sport. Overall, bicycling, football, playground activities, basketball and soccer are associated with the greatest number of traumatic brain injury-related visits to the emergency department<sup>1</sup>. Numbers and rates are highest in football and girls soccer<sup>2</sup>.

1. Gilchrist J, Thomas KE, Xu L, McGuire LC, Coronado VG. Nonfatal sports and recreation related traumatic brain injuries among children and adolescents treated in emergency departments in the United States, 2001-2009. MMWR 2011; 60(39):1337-1342.

2. Gessel LM, Fields SK, Collins CL, Dick RW, Comstock RD. Concussions Among United States High School and Collegiate Athletes. J Athl Train. 2007; 42(4): 495-503.