

Concussion Myths and Facts

- You cannot go to sleep after a concussion: Myth.** As long as the symptoms are not getting any worse and new symptoms do not arise during the first minutes and hours immediately following a concussion, it's recommended that if you need to sleep, you should. This is the brain's way of beginning the healing process. If you notice any new symptoms or existing symptoms get worse, it is recommended that you seek emergency medical attention.
- Any healthcare professional can treat a concussion: Myth.** Concussions are a complex injury and require a specialized and multi-disciplinary approach to treatment. Not every healthcare professional is fully trained in the empirically-driven methods for assessment and treatment of concussion. In fact, some research surveys purport that only 68% of graduated chief residents were comfortable in managing sport-related concussions. It is a very unique injury, one that often requires the specialized training offered by neuropsychologists and neurologists.
- Athletes don't always know when they've received a concussion: Fact.** Athletes will not always acknowledge that they have sustained a concussion. Consciously, an athlete may under-report their symptoms, minimize the severity of the injury, and/or attempt to play through the pain. Subconsciously, they may even be unaware of how to recognize subtle symptoms, how many previous concussions they've actually had (e.g., "Bell Rung"), or fear being removed from play for an extended period of time.
- Concussions can occur without hitting the head directly: Fact.** In the case of whiplash, for instance a forceful blow to the neck or body can cause the brain to accelerate and decelerate within the skull, resulting in axonal shearing or tearing at the site of injury.
- It is safe for a child to return to play if the symptoms are still present but less intense: Myth.** Experts from around the world agree that no athlete should be allowed to return to physical activity until totally asymptomatic (showing no symptoms). After a concussion, the brain needs rest and time to heal, and this cannot happen when it is subjected to physical activity (athletic), cognitive exertion (classroom), and the emotional up's and down's that characterize a youth's behavior patterns (life). Returning a child or teenager to physical and cognitive activities before symptoms dissipate risks further injury, decreases in performance, and potentially debilitating long-term effects such as depression, anxiety, and in some cases, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE).
- A concussion only affects the injured individual: Myth.** A concussion, just like any TBI, has a profound affect on everyone surrounding them, including parents and family, coaches, academic personnel, and healthcare professionals. Therefore, it is vital to treat concussions from a multi-disciplinary approach. At the Sports Concussion Institute, our aim is to safely and accurately assess, treat, and evaluate the progress of recovery, as well as educate and involve those who make up the social support system of the concussed child.