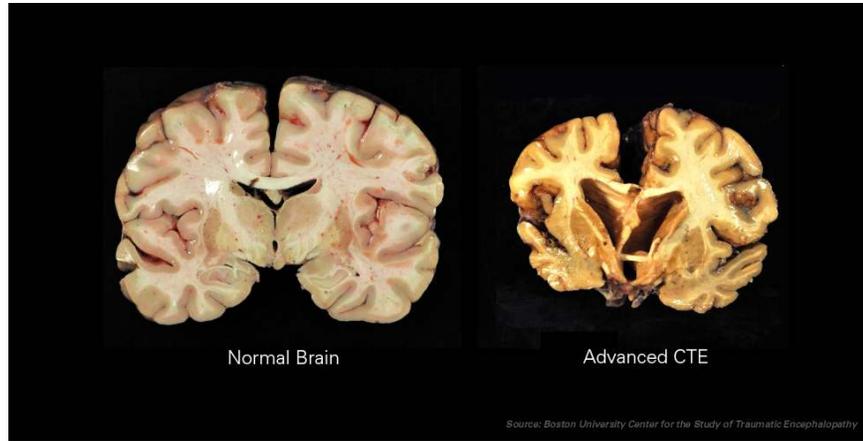


*Life's problems wouldn't be called "hurdles" if there wasn't a way to get over them....*

## **Concussions in Youth Sports**

Over the past few years, concussions and player safety in sports has become a topic that is frequently discussed. A large amount of the concern with the injury surrounds the sport of football due to a cadre of former professional football players being diagnosed with [chronic traumatic encephalopathy](#)



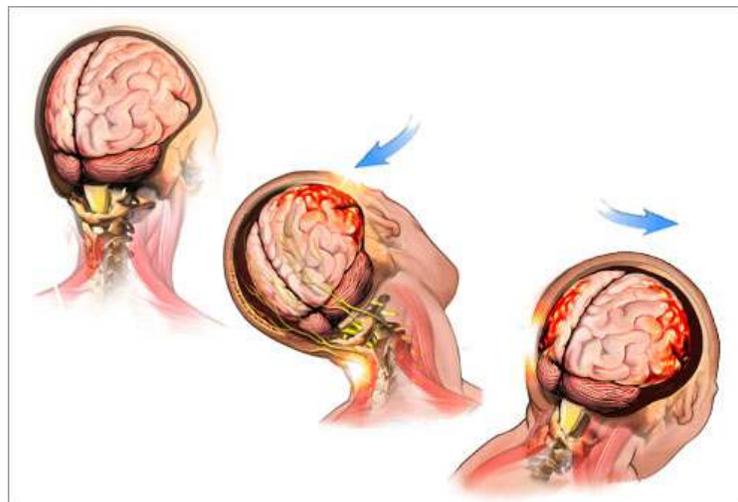
(CTE) in post mortem examinations. However, this is because of the repetitive nature of injuries in this sport due to collisions.

## **What is a Concussion?**

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a blow to the head or a fall that jars the brain inside the skull. While the brain is protected from most sudden movements by the cushion-like fluid surrounding it, bigger impacts can send the brain crashing into your skull, which is when injury occurs.

There are usually no visible signs of a concussion, such as a cut or bruise. Sometimes a concussion will be identifiable if the victim loses consciousness for even a split second and forgets what happened prior to their injury. In most instances the victims don't pass out, so it can be difficult for non- medical professionals to tell if one has occurred.

Some of the symptoms of concussions include not thinking clearly, not being able to concentrate or remember, nausea and vomiting, lingering headaches, light or noise sensitivity, and more emotional mood swings, among other things. If you are experiencing a few of these after a heavy knock during a game it is best to go see a doctor for expert advice.



## Concussions and the Teenage Brain

With brains that are still growing, there is significant concern about the effect that concussions can have on teenage athletes in the long run. Some studies have suggested that teenage athletes with a history of multiple concussions experience some lingering effects on cognitive function; however, no definitive conclusion has been made in this regard.



There is also concern that teenage athletes are more susceptible to concussions. One recent study using insurance claim data showed that teenagers were most likely to be diagnosed with concussions with 15-18 year olds accounting for 46% of the diagnoses covered in the study (ages 0-22 from 2007-2015).

Studies have also shown that a young person who suffers a concussion is one and a half times (1.5X) more likely to suffer another. After the second, they are then THREE times (3X) more likely to have another.

While figures like these might move, parents have begun to weigh the risks of their kid's involvement in sports due to the possibility of head injuries. Experts maintain to believe that there is no reason to make a decision such as keeping your child away from sports. Simply put, the risk of your child experiencing a concussion does not outweigh the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional benefits of participating in sports. In fact, your athlete could sustain a concussion falling off their chair at school.

## In What Sports are Concussions Most Frequent?

There are no definitive numbers available nationally that let us know exactly how many concussions there are in youth sports each year. A recent study published in the journal *Pediatrics* last year estimated that between 1.1 million and 1.9 million concussions related to sports and recreation occur annually in Americans 18 years old and younger.

We have already mentioned that concussions occur most frequently in football and most studies show elevated concussion diagnoses during the months of September and October, peak football season. This is simply due to the nature of the game, but other sports such as soccer, rugby, ice hockey, boxing, skiing, and snowboarding are examples of sports in which players are at repeated risk of concussion from head trauma from collisions or falls that occur naturally during competition.



## How Do I Recover From a Concussion?

In the case you have been diagnosed with a concussion, then [rest](#) is the best way to recover. Some people begin to feel better after a day or two, while in some cases it could take weeks before a number of symptoms subside. This just depends on the severity of the injury.

If you try to get back to your regular activity, but still experience symptoms, it means that you are not ready to return and should continue resting. Recently concussed athletes are especially at risk of getting concussed again and experiencing even more serious brain injury. Studies also show that high school age athletes take more time to recover than their older counterparts.



## Concussion Guidelines

The 2014 [National Athletic Trainer's Association \(NATA\)](#) position statement on concussions recommends that Athletic Trainers be present at all organized sporting activities. These experts are also expected to share the latest information regarding testing, diagnosis, and management of concussions with other individuals, such as administrators, parents, and coaches. This will help increase their awareness and ability to make the right decisions.

All 50 states and the District of Columbia also have youth concussion laws of varying severity to prevent athletes from re-entering games if a concussion is suspected.

If those in charge are doing their jobs correctly based on the above, your safety on the court or field should be a priority. The prevention, diagnosis, and recovery processes related to the injury will be well taken care of. If you feel concerned then have a conversation with those in charge.

### Definitions:

Chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) – a progressive degenerative disease which affects the brain of people who have suffered repeated concussions and traumatic brain injuries, such as athletes who take part in contact sports, members of the military, and others.