

Second concussion can be serious for young athletes

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Sustaining a second concussion shortly after a first one can lead to serious problems for young athletes, making it extremely important for players to be correctly diagnosed after being hit in the head.

“Second impact syndrome occurs when the brain swells rapidly after a person suffers a second concussion before symptoms of the first concussion have subsided,” said Dr. Patrick McCulloch with the Methodist Center for Sports Medicine in Houston. “While this condition is rare, the results can be catastrophic leading to permanent [brain damage](#) or even death. It doesn’t matter how severe it is or if the second concussion occurs days or weeks after the first concussion.”

Whether it’s minor or major, a concussion interferes with [brain function](#) and can affect memory, judgment, reflexes, speech, balance and coordination.

The National Athletic Trainers’ Association says more than 65,000 concussions occur among [high school football](#) players each year, with research suggesting the number may be higher since symptoms go unreported. The fear is that some players hide their condition and coaches, not being aware, continue to let the players practice and play in games. McCulloch said players, coaches and parents need to understand the severity of multiple concussions.

“Trainers and/or doctors need to do a thorough neurologic exam on the

sidelines,” McCulloch said. “Other symptoms they should be looking for include headache, blurry vision, and fogginess; difficulty concentrating or sleeping. Symptoms of post-concussive syndrome can last days or even weeks.”

New guidelines put forth by a panel of international neurologists states that any athlete, age 18 or younger, who was believed to have sustained a concussion during a game or practice should never be allowed back on the field the same day. The panel also recommends players need physical rest as well as cognitive rest after a concussion; limiting video games, schoolwork and other activities will help aid in the recovery.

“When it comes to concussions we have to think about the individual first and not about his value to the team or winning a playoff game,” McCulloch said. “Taking necessary precautions at the time of the first [concussion](#) will give the kid a better chance at a normal life once he or she hangs it up.”

Provided by Methodist Hospital System

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