

Simple test may help judge concussion in athletes

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A simple test of reaction time may help determine whether athletes have sustained a concussion (also known as mild traumatic brain injury) and when they are ready to play again, according to a study released today that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 62nd Annual Meeting in Toronto April 10 to April 17, 2010.

"Research has shown that [reaction time](#) is slower after a concussion—even as long as several days after other symptoms are gone," said study author James T. Eckner, MD, of the University of Michigan Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in Ann Arbor. "But the tests currently used to measure reaction time require computers and special software."

Eckner and his colleagues developed a simple, inexpensive device to measure reaction time: a cylinder attached to a weighted disk. The examiner releases the device and the [athlete](#) catches it as soon as possible.

For the study, the researchers gave the test to 209 Division I college football, wrestling and women's soccer athletes during their preseason physicals. Then any athlete who had a concussion diagnosed by a physician during the season took the test again within three days of the concussion.

Eight athletes had concussions during the study. Of those, seven of the athletes had a prolonged reaction time after the [concussion](#) compared to

the preseason time. Catching the object took about 15 percent longer.

"Because of its simplicity and low cost, this test may work well with youth athletes, where there is limited access to computerized testing of reaction time," Eckner said.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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