



## OC Pros on Head Knocks, Sun Threats, ADD Medicine and How To Tell the Kids that You're Dating

### Head-Bang Alert

**Q:** My 11-year-old plays football and had what the doctor said was a minor concussion at the beginning of the season last year from a tackling drill. He was fine after a couple days. Then in the last few games last season he started complaining of headaches. Is it possible there is a connection between his headaches and the concussion from that many months ago? Is it okay that he plays this year? - *Dizzy Dad, Seal Beach*

**A:** Have you ever heard of PCS, or Post Concussion Syndrome? No? Well you are not alone. Most parents are unaware of this very real danger to their child's health. PCS is a combination of symptoms that follow a concussion and may include: headaches, fatigue, dizziness, difficulties concentrating, trouble learning new things, vision impairment, memory loss and changes to personality or emotional stability. PCS symptoms are often very difficult to link to an earlier concussion because they can develop weeks or sometimes months after the head trauma occurred. Additionally, the severity of the symptoms may not seem to match the level of the head injury, which causes additional confusion. When undiagnosed, a person's new behavior (like drinking, falling grades or angry outbursts, for example), can lead them to feel misunderstood by family and friends. Interventions may also be ineffective because they are not targeting the PCS.

How concerned should parents be about PCS? Approximately 2 million people will sustain a head injury in the United States this year, and about 20% of those injuries will be sports related. Parents should also know that after a concussion, a person is 4 times as likely to receive a second concussion, and the risk increases 8 times after a 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> head trauma. This

is likely due to the impairment in judgment, coordination, and quickness that a head injury may cause.

So what is a parent to do? There is good news, mom and dad, when it comes to protecting your child from PCS. First and foremost, make sure your child always wears a properly fitting helmet during sports activities. Also, PCS is very treatable when detected so encourage your athlete to be honest about their injuries. This is very important because many athletes hide their symptoms for fear of losing playing time or a position on their team for an injury that no one can see. A concussion by definition means a shaken brain. It's essential to understand that although you can see injuries like a sprained ankle, you will never see a concussion even though the impact of the injury is very real.

If you believe that your child has sustained a concussion then take a time out from sports activity to evaluate the extent of their injuries, even if they did not lose consciousness. Be on the lookout for the symptoms of PCS following any blow to the head and seek assistance from a medical professional if they do arise. – *Dr. Casey Cooper*