



# Get a Heads Up on Concussion in Sports Policies

*Information for Parents, Coaches, and  
School & Sports Professionals*

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention



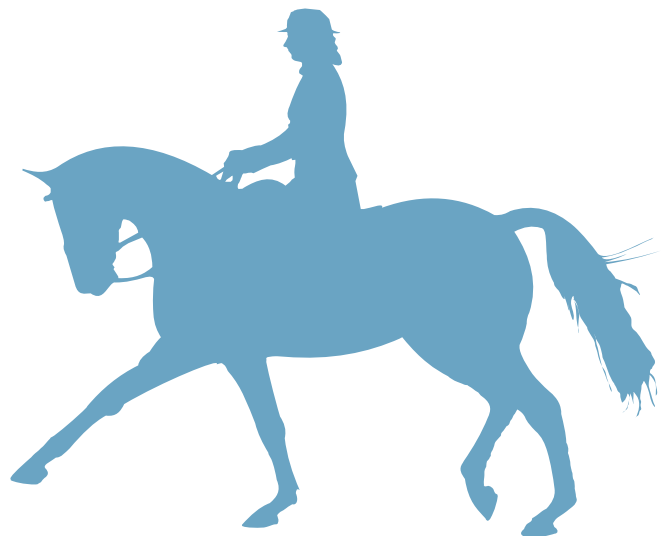
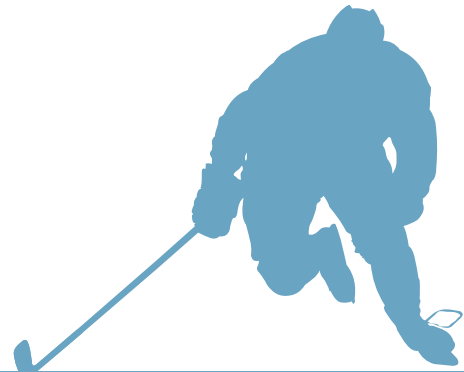
# What Do We Know?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that can have a serious effect on a young, developing brain.<sup>1,2</sup> While most children and teens with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have concussion symptoms that last for days, weeks, or even months.

Not giving the brain enough time to heal after a concussion can be dangerous. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain heals from the first, usually within a short amount of time (hours, days, weeks), can slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term health problems. These may include changes in how the child or teen thinks, feels, and acts, as well as their ability to learn and remember. While rare, a repeat concussion can result in brain swelling or permanent brain damage. It can even be fatal.<sup>6-10</sup>

## The Facts

- Athletes who have had a concussion, at any point in their lives, have a greater chance of getting another concussion.
- Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and can take longer to recover than adults.<sup>3-5</sup>
- Recognizing and responding properly to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.<sup>6-10</sup>



# What Can We Do?

A concussion can happen at home, school, or play. So everyone from parents and coaches, to sports leagues officials and school professionals, can play an important role in learning how to spot a concussion, and knowing what to do if they think a child or teen has a concussion.

## Policy Efforts

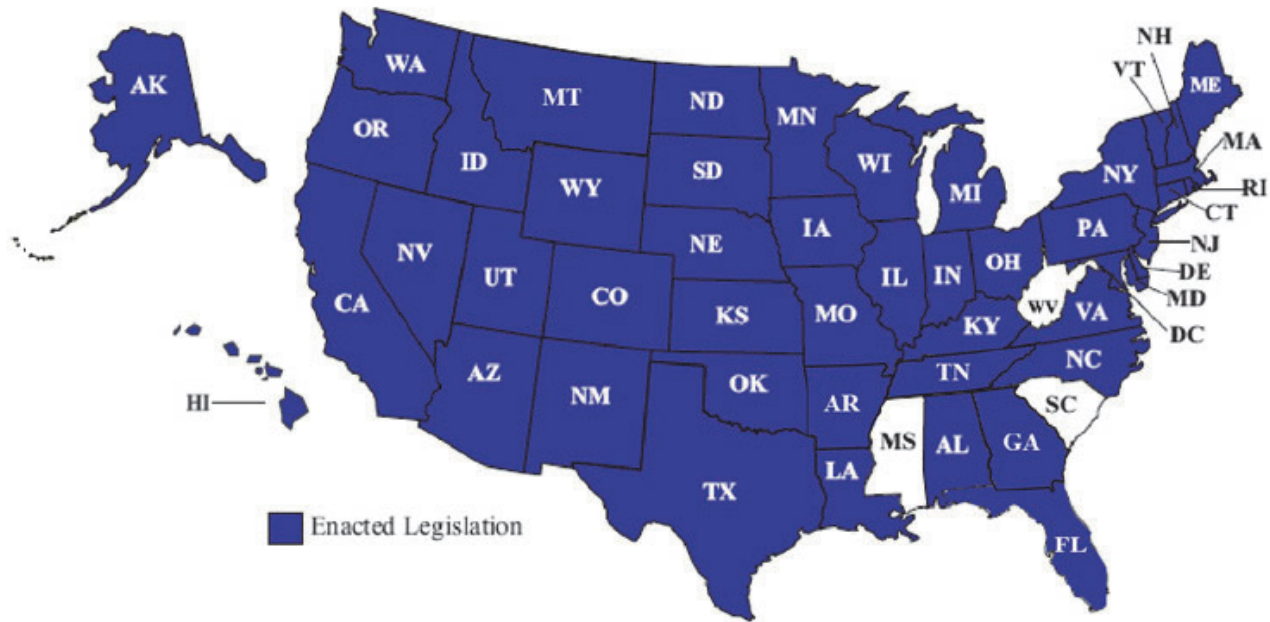
Recently many states, schools, and sports leagues and organizations have created policies or action plans on concussion in youth and high school sports. While these policy efforts show some promise, more research is needed to learn if these strategies can help educate coaches and parents about this issue and help protect children and teens from concussion and other serious brain injuries.<sup>12,13</sup>



Check out a CDC report that includes lessons learned from Washington and Massachusetts on implementing their states' concussion in sports laws. Learn more at: [www.cdc.gov/concussion/policies.html](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/policies.html).

## State Laws:

Beginning in 2009, the state of Washington passed the first concussion in sports law, called the Zackery Lystedt Law.<sup>14</sup> One month later, Max's law<sup>15</sup> passed in Oregon. In total, between 2009 and 2012, 43 states, and the District of Columbia, passed laws on concussion in sports for youth and/or high school athletes, often called Return to Play Laws. So far in 2013, four additional states have also passed Return to Play Laws. Some organizations, such as the National Conference of State Legislatures, have created online maps to track and update concussion in sports laws by state.



Source: National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013.<sup>16</sup>

## Most Concussion in Sports Laws Include Three Action Steps:

- 1 Educate Coaches, Parents, and Athletes:** Inform and educate coaches, athletes, and their parents and guardians about concussion through training and/or a concussion information sheet.
- 2 Remove Athlete from Play:** An athlete who is believed to have a concussion is to be removed from play right away.
- 3 Obtain Permission to Return to Play:** An athlete can only return to play or practice after at least 24 hours and with permission from a health care professional.

These action steps are based on recommendations presented in the International Concussion Consensus Statement.<sup>17</sup>

First created in 2002 and most recently updated in 2008, the Consensus Statement was developed by experts in the field and includes the latest science available on concussion in sports.



For more information and resources on  
concussion and the CDC's Heads Up program,  
visit: [www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion).