

HEADS UP
CONCUSSION





Plan ahead. What do you want your child or teen to know about concussions?

Talk with your rider about concussions. Tell them to report their concussion symptoms to you and their trainer/coach right away. Some children and teens think concussions aren't serious or worry that if they report a concussion they will lose their position on the team or look weak. Be sure to remind them that it's better to miss one event than the whole season.

CONCUSSION INFO SHEET FOR EQUESTRIAN PARENTS

This sheet has information to help protect your child or teen rider from a concussion or other serious brain injury. Use this information at your rider's competitions and practices to learn how to spot a concussion and what to do if a concussion occurs.

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury—or TBI—caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. This fast movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging the brain cells.

HOW CAN I HELP MY RIDER STAY SAFE?

Sports are a great way for children and teens to stay healthy and can help them do well in school. To help lower your rider's chances of getting a concussion or other serious brain injury, you should:

- Help create a culture of safety.
- Work with their trainer/coach to teach ways to lower the chances of getting a concussion.
- Talk with your rider about concussion and ask if they have concerns about reporting a concussion. Talk with them about their concerns and let them know it is OK and their job to report a concussion and take time to recover.
- Ensure that they follow their trainer/coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Tell your rider that you expect them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Teach your rider that they must wear a helmet to lower the chances of the most serious types of brain or head injury. However, there is no "concussion-proof" helmet. So, even with a helmet, it is important for riders to avoid falls or hits to the head.

HOW CAN I SPOT A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

Riders who show or report one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below—or simply say they just "don't feel right" after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body—may have a concussion or other serious brain injury.

Signs Observed by Trainers/Coaches or Parents

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Forgets an instruction, is confused about an assignment.
- Moves clumsily.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness (even briefly).
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes.
- Can't recall events prior to or after a hit or fall.

Symptoms Reported by Children or Teens

- Headache or "pressure" in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness, or double or blurry vision.





Concussions affect each child and teen differently. While most children and teens with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks, some will have symptoms for months or longer. Talk with your children's or teens' health care provider if their concussion symptoms do not go away or if they get worse after they return to their regular activities.

Children and teens who continue to ride while having concussion symptoms or who return to riding too soon—while the brain is still healing—have a greater chance of getting another concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs while the brain is still healing from the first injury can be very serious and can affect a child or teen for a lifetime. It can even be fatal.

- Bothered by light or noise.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy.
- Confusion, or concentration or memory problems.
- Just not “feeling right,” or “feeling down”.

NOTE: Concussion signs and symptoms often show up soon after the injury, but it can be hard to tell how serious the concussion is at first. Some symptoms may not be noticed or may not show up for hours or days

WHAT ARE SOME MORE SERIOUS DANGER SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR?

In rare cases, a dangerous collection of blood (hematoma) may form on the brain after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body and can squeeze the brain against the skull. Call 9-1-1 or take your child or teen to the emergency department right away if, after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, he or she has one or more of these danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other.
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up.
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away.
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea, convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching).
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation.
- Loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out). Even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK MY RIDER HAS A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

As a parent, if you think your rider may have a concussion:

- 1. Keep your child or teen from riding the day of the injury.** Your child or teen should be seen by a health care provider and only return to riding with permission from a health care provider who is experienced in evaluating for concussion.
- 2. Ask your child's or teen's health care provider for written instructions on helping your child or teen return to school.** You can give the instructions to your child's or teen's school nurse and teacher(s) and return-to-riding instructions to the trainer/coach and/or athletic trainer.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Only a health care provider should assess a child or teen for a possible concussion. Concussion signs and symptoms often show up soon after the injury. But you may not know how serious the concussion is at first, and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days.

The brain needs time to heal after a concussion. A child's or teen's return to school and sports should be a gradual process that is carefully managed and monitored by a health care provider.

To learn more, go to www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP

You can also download the CDC HEADS UP app to have concussion information at your fingertips. Just scan the QR code pictured to the left with your smartphone.

