

Injury Prevention At CDC: Keeping Kids And Teens Safe From Concussion

(NAPSA)—Millions of Americans are injured each year, and for some it leads to disability and profoundly affects their lives and the lives of others. The good news—**injuries are preventable.** The Injury Center at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working hard to implement programs that reduce injuries and their impact. CDC's "Heads Up" is one initiative that focuses on preventing and responding to concussion among young athletes.

More than 38 million boys and girls participate in organized youth sports across the U.S., and concussions—caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull—are one of the most commonly reported injuries among kids and teens who participate in these activities.

Though they are sometimes described as "dings" or having one's "bell rung," even a seemingly mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. While most athletes who sustain a concussion will recover, some will continue to have problems that can affect the way they think, learn, feel and act.

Early identification of an athlete with concussion is critical, as athletes who return to play too soon following initial injury are at risk for a repeat concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days or weeks)—can be very dangerous and may slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term problems. Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

Youth sports coaches and parents are on the front line in the effort to identify and respond to concussions, and they are eager to learn how to keep their athletes



safe and healthy. That is why CDC's Injury Center is working hard to equip youth sports coaches and parents across the country with the "Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports" tool kit. The tool kit explains how to prevent, recognize and respond to a concussion (in English and Spanish). It includes fact sheets and a clipboard and a magnet with key information—so it's right at their fingertips when needed.

To best protect athletes and prevent long-term problems, the "Heads Up" tool kit materials provide a comprehensive list of signs and symptoms of concussion as well as important steps to take when a concussion is suspected.

Coaches and parents also need to:

- Insist that safety comes first;
- Ensure that athletes always wear the right protective equipment for their activity; and
- Make sure that their youth sports league or administrator has a concussion action plan in place.

Coaches, parents and athletes need to recognize and manage injuries—especially concussions—to keep kids on a safe, winning team.

CDC's Injury Center wants kids and teens to know that a concussion is a serious injury. If you think you have a concussion, don't hide it; report it and take time to recover. It's better to miss one game than the whole season.

For more information on concussion in sports, visit CDC on the Web at www.cdc.gov/concussion.