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SPORTS

Treat Concussion Seriously

Editor's note: *Amon Ferry, a Harvard sports medicine fellowship-trained orthopedic surgeon who is certified by the American Board of Orthopedic Surgeons, is the new sports-medicine columnist for Republic community sections. He has extensive experience working with athletes and professional teams.*

Now that football season has started, I would like to take some time to talk about concussions. A concussion is a traumatic head injury that disrupts normal brain function and is often referred to as “getting your bell rung.” In severe cases you may lose consciousness, but even minor changes in mental status should be taken seriously.

How do I know if I had a concussion? Initial symptoms may include, disorientation, ringing in the ears, and confusion. Later symptoms commonly include memory difficulties, inability to concentrate or communicate, and sensitivity to light and noise. These symptoms may last a few minutes or several days depending on the severity of the concussion.

What should I do if I think I had a concussion? If you are in a game notify your coaches or athletic trainer immediately and have them examine you. There are quick and easy tests that can be done on the sidelines to see if it is safe for you to go back into the game. If a concussion is not promptly recognized and appropriately managed, you may be at risk for



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Medicine**
AMON FERRY

second impact syndrome- a potentially fatal injury that can occur when a second concussion occurs before the first has resolved.

If I had a concussion, when can I return to play? That is a difficult question to answer and is best addressed by a healthcare professional

on an individual basis. Generally speaking, it is advisable to sit out the rest of the game, especially if it is a contact or collision sport. For minor concussions, once your symptoms have resolved then you can start light exercise and progress to full sport as long as you remain symptom free. For more severe concussions, you may have to undergo further cognitive testing before resuming athletic activities.

Concussions are common and it is important for the parent and athlete as well as the medical staff and coaches to recognize a concussion immediately and treat it appropriately so that the athlete can get back to safe competition.

*Reach Amon Ferry at
DrFerry@ValleyOrthoAZ.com, 623-882-1292
or www.amonferrymd.com.*