A blow to the head — while falling off a bike or playing sports, for example — can cause a concussion, which can temporarily change the way the brain works. Symptoms of a concussion can last for hours, days, weeks, or longer. Everyone should know how to avoid getting a concussion, how to recognize the signs of a concussion, and what to do if a concussion happens.

Related KidsHealth Links

Articles for Kids:

- Concussions
  KidsHealth.org/en/kids/concussion.html
- Five Ways to Avoid Sports Injuries
- Bike Safety
  KidsHealth.org/en/kids/bike-safety.html
- Your Brain and Nervous System

Resource for educators:

- Concussions Special Needs Factsheet
  KidsHealth.org/en/parents/concussions-factsheet.html
- Concussions: What Parents and Coaches Say

Discussion Questions

Note: The following questions are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

1. What does it mean if someone gets a concussion? What are some symptoms of a concussion? What are some ways kids can get concussions? What can happen inside your head if you get a concussion?

2. How do you know if you have may have had a concussion? If you think you might have a concussion, how will you know when it’s safe to play sports again?

3. What is the “thinking” part of your brain called? Name some ways you can be good to your brain.
Activities for Students

Note: The following activities are written in language appropriate for sharing with your students.

Concussion Charades

Objectives:
Students will:
• Learn to Identify common symptoms of a concussion

Materials:
• “Concussion Symptoms” handout for teachers
• Whiteboard, chalkboard, or posterboard and marker

Class Time:
• 45 minutes

Activity:
[Note to teacher: Display the “Concussion Symptoms” handout on a whiteboard or write the symptoms on a posterboard or chalkboard. Print a “Concussion Symptoms” handout, then cut along the dotted lines to make symptom cards. Place the cards in a hat, bag, box, or other container.]

If someone ever hits his or her head against something, one thing you should remember to do is think about concussion symptoms. Because if you or a friend have any concussion symptoms after a head knock, you should tell a parent or teacher as soon as you can. To help us remember the possible symptoms, we’re going to play Concussion Charades.

First, we’ll read the KidsHealth.org article about concussions. Then we’ll split up into two teams. One by one, a student from each team will take a card and then act out the concussion symptom, without speaking. Students on the other team will raise their hands and try to guess what the symptom it is. You can look at the symptoms list on the board to help you guess.

Extension:
Have your students listen to this podcast for kids from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — “A Bump on the Head,” www2c.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=5539757 — then discuss ways your class can create a public service announcement for kids about concussions. The PSA can be posters for the gym or playground, a message to be read with the morning announcements, or a video for a school assembly.
Smart Ways to Protect Your Brain

Objectives:
Students will:
• Learn some of the parts of the brain and their functions
• Learn how to protect the brain from injury

Materials:
• “Smart Ways to Protect Your Brain” handout
• Pencils or pens

Class Time:
• 45 minutes

Activity:
First, we're going to learn about some of the parts of the brain and what they do, then we're going to talk about ways to protect our brains. After you read the KidsHealth.org article “Your Brain and Nervous System,” please complete the first page of the “Smart Ways to Protect Your Brain” handout. Now let’s talk about preventing concussions. Did you know that thousands of kids get concussions each year from accidents that happen while playing sports or riding bikes? Kids hurt their heads other ways, too, like slipping on icy sidewalks, or falling off trampolines, bunk beds, skateboards, you name it. After reading the KidsHealth.org articles about sports and bike safety, on the second page of the handout, write five things you do that could result in a head injury if you're not careful. Also list some ways to stay safe during those activities. Then we'll discuss some of the activities you wrote and see if we can come up with even more ways to be safe.

Extensions:
Have students cut out pictures from magazines or print photos from the Internet to make collages of the many different types of helmets and other protective head gear that kids use in sports and recreational activities. They can also make collages of protective head gear adults wear at work.

Reproducible Materials

Handout: Concussion Symptoms Handout for Teachers
KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/problems/conditions/concussions_handout1.pdf

Handout: Smart Ways to Protect Your Brain
KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/problems/conditions/concussions_handout2.pdf

Quiz: Concussions
KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/problems/conditions/concussions_quiz.pdf

Answer Key: Concussions
KidsHealth.org/classroom/3to5/problems/conditions/concussions_quiz_answers.pdf
## Concussion Symptoms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>headache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slurred speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dizzy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>confused (dazed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can’t remember things (amnesia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upset stomach or vomiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knocked out (loses consciousness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sleepy (drowsy, groggy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blurry vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light seems too bright (sensitive to light)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noise seems too loud (sensitive to noise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nervous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acting weird (unusual behavior)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>easily bothered (irritable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seizure or convulsion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Smart Ways to Protect Your Brain

Instructions: Using the word bank, label the brain. At the bottom, write a sentence describing the function of each part of the brain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD BANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brain stem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pituitary gland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebellum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothalamus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. ____________________________
b. ____________________________
c. ____________________________
d. ____________________________
e. ____________________________

a. ____________________________
b. ____________________________
c. ____________________________
d. ____________________________
e. ____________________________
Smart Ways to Protect Your Brain

Instructions: Write down five activities that you do that could possibly result in a head injury if you’re not careful. Then write some ways to stay safe during those activities.

1. Activity: ________________________________
   Ways to stay safe: ________________________________
   ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________

2. Activity: ________________________________
   Ways to stay safe: ________________________________
   ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________

3. Activity: ________________________________
   Ways to stay safe: ________________________________
   ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________

4. Activity: ________________________________
   Ways to stay safe: ________________________________
   ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________

5. Activity: ________________________________
   Ways to stay safe: ________________________________
   ________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________

Quiz

1. True or false. Most of the time, after a mild head injury, people return to normal even if the injury caused a concussion.

2. Which of the following is not a common symptom of a concussion?
   a) Headache
   b) Feeling dizzy or sleepy
   c) Laughing
   d) Vomiting
   e) Forgetting what just happened

3. Name two ways to help prevent getting a concussion:

   __________________________
   __________________________

4. Which of the following is not good for your brain?
   a) Eating healthy foods
   b) Exercising regularly
   c) Staying away from alcohol, drugs, and tobacco
   d) Wearing a baseball cap under your bike helmet to keep the sun out of your eyes
   e) Giving your brain a workout by doing puzzles, playing music, reading, or creating art

5. Your brain has many different parts that work together. Name at least three major parts of the brain:

   __________________________
   __________________________
   __________________________

6. Fill in the blanks using the word bank:
The biggest part of the brain, making up 85% of the brain's weight, is the ___________. The ______________, like the thermostat that controls the heater and air conditioner in your house, knows what temperature your body should be. The ______________ controls breathing air, digesting food, and circulating blood. The ______________, located at the back of the brain, controls balance, movement, and coordination. The ______________, which is about the size of a pea, releases hormones that make you grow.

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Quiz Answer Key

1. True or false. Most of the time, after a mild head injury, people return to normal even if the injury caused a concussion.

2. Which of the following is **not** a common symptom of a concussion?
   a) Headache
   b) Feeling dizzy or sleepy
   c) **Laughing**
   d) Vomiting
   e) Forgetting what just happened

3. Name two ways to help prevent getting a concussion:
   Any two of the following: **Tell your coach or parent if you get hit in the head, wear your seatbelt when you're traveling in a car,** follow the rules when playing sports.

4. Which of the following is **not** good for your brain?
   a) Eating healthy foods
   b) Exercising regularly
   c) Staying away from alcohol, drugs, and tobacco
   d) **Wearing a baseball cap under your bike helmet to keep the sun out of your eyes**
   e) Giving your brain a workout by doing puzzles, playing music, reading, or creating art

5. Your brain has many different parts that work together. Name at least three major parts of the brain:
   **Any three of the following:** cerebrum, cerebellum, brain stem, pituitary gland, hypothalamus

6. Fill in the blanks using the word bank:
The biggest part of the brain, making up 85% of the brain's weight, is the **cerebrum**. The **hypothalamus**, like the thermostat that controls the heater and air conditioner in your house, knows what temperature your body should be. The **brain stem** controls breathing air, digesting food, and circulating blood. The **cerebellum**, located at the back of the brain, controls balance, movement, and coordination. The **pituitary gland**, which is about the size of a pea, releases hormones that make you grow.

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