

CONCUSSION FACT SHEET FOR COACHES



WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

Concussion, a type of traumatic brain injury, is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth—literally causing the brain to bounce around or twist within the skull.

This sudden movement of the brain causes stretching and tearing of brain cells, damaging the cells and creating chemical changes in the brain.

HOW CAN I RECOGNIZE A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

Concussions can result from a fall or from athletes colliding with each other, the ground, or with an obstacle, such as a goalpost. Even a "ding," "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

As a coach you are on the front line in identifying an athlete with a suspected concussion. You know your athletes well and can recognize when something is off—even when the athlete doesn't know it or doesn't want to admit it.

So to help spot a concussion, you should watch for and ask others to report the following two things:

1. A forceful bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.

AND

2. Any concussion signs or symptoms, such as a change in the athlete's behavior, thinking, or physical functioning.

Signs and symptoms of concussion generally show up soon after the injury. But the full effect of the injury may not be noticeable at first. For example, in the first few minutes the athlete might be slightly confused or appear a little bit dazed, but an hour later they can't recall coming to the practice or game.

You should repeatedly check for signs of concussion and also tell parents what to watch out for at home. Any worsening of concussion signs or symptoms indicates a medical emergency.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Athletes who experience one or more of the signs and symptoms listed below, or who report that they just "don't feel right," after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, may have a concussion.

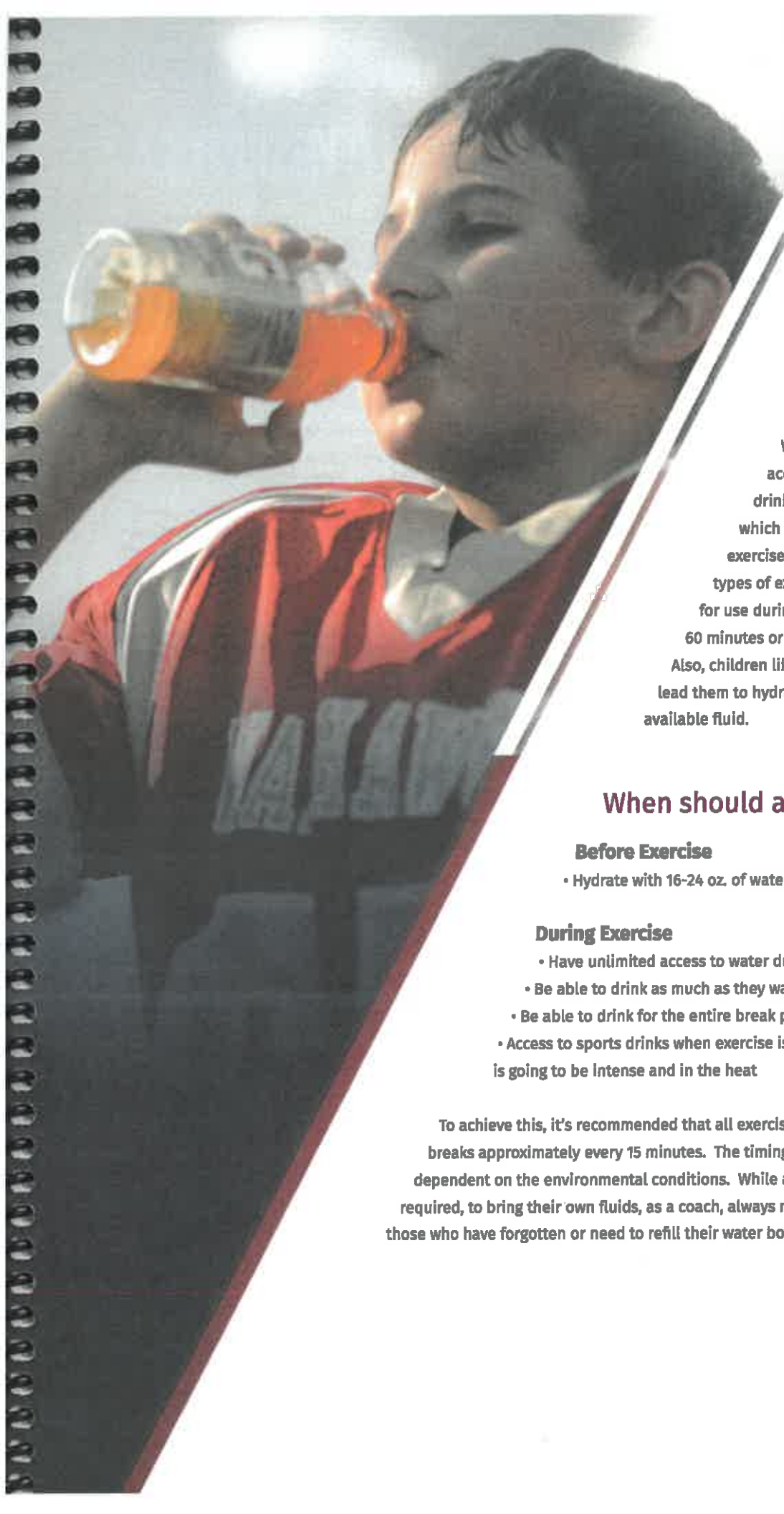
SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE:

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not "feeling right" or is "feeling down"

SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall





What types of fluid should I use for hydrating?

Water is the least expensive and most accessible fluid during exercise. Sports drinks contain electrolytes, sugar and water, which give athletes important nutrients during exercise. While water is appropriate during all types of exercise, sports drinks are recommended for use during intense exercise that is greater than 60 minutes or during intense exercise in the heat. Also, children like the taste of sports drinks, so it may lead them to hydrate more than if water is the only available fluid.

When should athletes hydrate?

Before Exercise

- Hydrate with 16-24 oz. of water or a sports drink

During Exercise

- Have unlimited access to water during exercise/activity
- Be able to drink as much as they want
- Be able to drink for the entire break period if they wish
- Access to sports drinks when exercise is greater than 60 minutes or if exercise is going to be intense and in the heat

To achieve this, it's recommended that all exercise sessions should have predetermined breaks approximately every 15 minutes. The timing and length of breaks should be dependent on the environmental conditions. While athletes may be encouraged, or even required, to bring their own fluids, as a coach, always make sure extra fluids are available for those who have forgotten or need to refill their water bottles.