

Concussion: Latest news and views

By AAFP SmartBrief

Being on the front lines of care for patients of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds means that family physicians are often the first to spot and respond to concussions. Each year, more than 1.6 million concussions occur during sports and other recreational activities in the United States, so vigilance for these injuries is essential. But it's also important to raise awareness among athletes, parents and coaches of the need to seek medical attention for a concussion and then strictly adhere to return-to-play recommendations. This special report presents recent news and information about concussions, including research into their causes and how to prevent them. Also highlighted are a number of resources the AAFP has developed to educate members and their patients about this serious public health risk.

Research and Trends

- **Study: Female college athletes with concussion may have worse symptoms**
A study presented at the American Academy of Neurology's Sports Concussion Conference found that female college athletes who have had a concussion may experience poorer cognitive performance, more symptoms and greater severity of symptoms during preseason testing, compared with male college athletes who have experienced a concussion. On average, women scored three points higher for severity of symptoms and experienced 1.5 more symptoms than men. Additional research is needed to confirm the findings, researchers said. [Medscape \(free registration\)](#) (7/28)
- **[American Family Physician discusses current concepts in concussion evaluation and management, plus related issues.](#)**
- **Research examines goggles' ability to detect concussion**
Researchers from the University of Miami are using a \$500,000 grant from GE, Under Armour and the National Football League to test the effectiveness of goggles they designed in collaboration with Neuro Kinetics to detect concussion. The goggles are capable of measuring pupil dilation symmetry and eye movement and speed to determine whether a patient has a concussion. The program, which is also supported by the Defense Department, hopes to test the goggles in 200 athletes and could ultimately be used on the battlefield. [The Miami Herald \(tiered subscription model\)](#) (7/15)
- **Study identifies potential blood marker for brain injury**
A study in the Journal of Neurotrauma has found lower concentrations of brain-derived neurotrophic factor in the blood are associated with severe brain damage among patients with traumatic injuries. The findings were based on an analysis of blood samples from 300 patients with traumatic brain injuries and 150 patients without brain injuries. Patients with higher levels of BDNF were more likely to recover within 6 months. [FDAnews](#) (8/4) , [PsychCentral.com](#) (8/4)

In the Clinic

- **Physicians have important role in screening student athletes**
More young athletes are participating in sports, underscoring the need for medical screening, writes Stacy Frye, M.D., in Contemporary Pediatrics. The preparticipation examination, considered a standard of care, allows for screening of child and adolescent athletes before they begin sports training and competition. The screening should be done at least 6 weeks prior to participation to permit time for any necessary follow-up, Frye writes. [Modern Medicine/Contemporary Pediatrics](#) (8/1)
- **[FamilyDoctor.org can help you educate patients about all aspects of concussion, from diagnosis and treatment to the dangers of returning to play too soon after an injury.](#)**