

Concussions can happen in all kids, not just athletes

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(Medical Xpress)—The gridiron is back in action. From little leagues to professional teams, football frenzy has begun, and with it, concerns about concussions. But it's not just jarring tackles that can lead to concussions in kids. According to Dr. Ryan Coates, a pediatric neurologist at Loyola University Health System, there are many ways kids are exposed to concussion risks.

"We hear a lot about concussions when it comes to sports and we should be on the lookout for head injuries, but athletes aren't the only ones who are at risk for [brain trauma](#)," Coates said.

Concussions are a result of a [traumatic brain injury](#) that causes a disruption of the brain function. Disruption of neurologic function can manifest itself with a multitude of symptoms, including headache, [loss of consciousness](#), concentration and memory disturbances, dizziness, nausea/vomiting and confusion.

"What symptoms a person experiences depends on how the brain moves within the skull as a result of the injury," Coates said. "Everyone is different and how a person responds after brain trauma is variable. Symptoms can last for a few hours or several months."

Coates said very young children are the most at risk for brain trauma because they have less protection.

"Young children are more dependent on caregivers to keep them safe

and don't have as many ways of protecting themselves from falls and accidents as adults and older children," Coates said.

Falls are the leading cause of traumatic brain injury in the country, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Also, nearly half of the traumatic brain injuries in children are from a fall.

"Parents need to watch their children carefully, especially around stairs and at the playground. Make sure your child isn't doing something that isn't age appropriate," Coates said. "Following safety guidelines for car seats is important for keeping kids safe as well."

Traumatic brain injuries and concussions shouldn't be taken lightly. Timely recognition and appropriate response are vital. Any child who has had a concussion should be seen by a physician within 24 hours and have a complete neurological exam.

"Even one [concussion](#) can have long-term effects, including learning difficulties and other issues that impact quality of life," Coates said.

Though all kids are susceptible to concussions, special attention does need to be given to kids participating in sports. According to Coates, it's imperative that coaches, supervisors and parents are all on the same page when it comes to brain injuries.

"Any child who has a head injury, even if it seems minor, should immediately be taken out of the event. Symptoms can happen immediately or even days after the injury, so don't take any chances. A child's [brain function](#) is more important than the next play," Coates said. "No one is immune to [head injuries](#). Just because someone has had head trauma before and didn't have any apparent issues doesn't mean the next hit won't cause substantial injury and long-term effects."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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