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**VDH CAUTIONS PARENTS AND COACHES ABOUT  
SPORTS RELATED CONCUSSIONS**

(RICHMOND, Va) - April is not only the beginning of spring but the start of the spring sports season. It's also a good time, according to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), to remind coaches and parents of what they can do to prevent concussions in youth athletes and what to do when these injuries occur.

To protect young athletes, VDH wants parents and coaches to know the warning signs of concussion, to know the recommendations around "return to play" practices, and to assure youth athletes properly use protective equipment, such as helmets. Parents should also be aware of the need to inform coaches of any recent concussion.

Concussions are a type of traumatic brain injury that can lead to permanent impairment or death if not recognized and treated promptly. Concussions result from a bump or blow to the head. Children are at increased risk as their brains are still developing plus they lack the protection of adult's heavier musculature. Symptoms can include headache, vomiting, balance problems, or confusion. The child may appear dazed, lose consciousness, be unable to recall the events prior to after the injury, or show a change in behavior. All concussions are serious and require prompt medical attention. Continuing to play a sport while concussed can lead to additional brain injury and even death.

"The good news is that the majority of athletes can recover completely from a concussion and return to their original level of performance, if the initial injury is recognized and managed properly," says State Health Commissioner, Karen Remley, MD, MBA, FAAP.

"Concussions can occur in any sport," said Dr. Remley. "Any blow to the head in a child or youth that is followed by changes in behavior, thinking or physical function needs prompt medical attention. Children need to be removed from play until they are evaluated."

More information from VDH is available at [www.PreventInjuriesVA.com](http://www.PreventInjuriesVA.com). Information and tools for coaches, young athletes and their families can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html>. Brain injury treatment and rehabilitation services information are at the websites of the Virginia Department of Rehabilitation Services, [www.vadrs.org](http://www.vadrs.org) and the Brain Injury Association of Virginia, [www.biav.net](http://www.biav.net).