

A simple flashcard test to detect concussions

By Gretchen Reynolds, New York Times

An easy, two-minute vision test administered on the sidelines after a young athlete has hit his or her head can help to reliably determine whether the athlete has sustained a concussion, according to a new study of student athletes, some as young as 5.

The test is so simple and inexpensive that any coach or parent potentially could administer it, the study's authors believe, and any league afford to provide it as a way to help evaluate and safeguard players.

Those of us who coach or care for young athletes know by now that an athlete who falls or collides with something during play or seems dazed, dizzy, loses consciousness or complains of head pain should be tested for a concussion, which occurs when the brain is physically jostled within the skull.

But most of us are clueless about how to test young athletes. The most commonly recommended sideline test is the Standardized Assessment of Concussion, a multipart examination during which athletes are asked to name the date, describe how they feel, memorize and recall lists of words, and do jumping jacks and other tests of coordination. Ideally, this assessment should be administered and evaluated by a medical professional.

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