

1. Do you remember what happened? Memory loss is the leading symptom, the specialists say. It can be the collision itself, a few moments afterward or a gap much longer. Whatever the duration, it's a concerning sign.

2. Did you give you a headache? And, just as important, **Do you still get headaches? On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the worst, how bad are the headaches? Does anything make them go away? Sensitive to light or noise? Are you doing anything in particular when they come back?** Would you believe, math and English class, if not texting or online time or even video games can exacerbate those painful episodes. That's why specialists joke that they are torturing teen-agers by taking away most, if not all, of their outside-school activities.

3. Did you black out? Loss of consciousness used to be a leading symptom, but not that the specialists are finding nowadays. (See questions Nos. 1, 2, 8 and 10.)

4. Did a certified athletic trainer or doctor see you soon after the injury? Unless it was a high-school game, a young athlete only gets medical attention if a parent/guardian takes them to a health professional or hospital.

5. Did your school/team give you a baseline test? In this region, and across more than half of Pennsylvania, the ImPACT test is prevalent. But there are other fashions of neurocognitive testing, which offers an important glimpse into the healthy brain of the athlete. If, for instance, the athlete already had taken a baseline ImPACT, they are given a follow-up exam moments prior to this examination by a specialist -- as a tangible tool for assessment. **How'd did you think you did on the retest? Did it give you a headache or bring back any of your symptoms?** In the majority of patients whose initial post-concussion exams I was allowed to witness, the kids scored in the 10th percentile or lower -- some even as poorly as the 1st percentile, the bottom. And these were kids who scored in the 70- to 90-percentile range on their original baseline test.

6. Do you feel tired or fatigued a lot more than usual? How are you sleeping? Do you nod off in class or have to go to the school nurse for a nap? Sure, kids prefer to stay in bed until noon. . . or later. But the sluggishness of a concussed youth shows itself to be more pronounced in this category sometimes.

7. Any nausea? Mom, Dad, how's his appetite?

8. How's your vision? Any problems? At this point, Dr. Collins offers a series of acuity tests. In one, he holds a pen with writing on it and gradually brings it closer to the kid's nose, asking the kid to read the words inscribed on it. Sometimes, that act causes a headache -- if you can raise a symptom in the examination room days or even weeks later, it's a telling sign that this could be a troublesome concussion. The specialists also can detect eye movement or pupil sizes that also signal vision problems due to a concussion. More and more, the specialists say, vision problems are becoming a common result.

Come to think of it, Dr. Collins still has a Cedar Point pen he borrowed from me amid one such exam. . . .

9. How are your grades? Any problems in school? This pertains more to the post-concussion patients, three weeks after the injury and beyond. Parent after parent, who initially believed their child's injury had healed or their fatigue and headaches were due to the flu, suddenly comes to a realization when a good student's schoolwork begins to lapse or severely drop: "Oh my gosh, it's the concussion!"

10. Any problems with dizziness or your balance? That's when the specialists pull out a hunk of memory foam, stand the kid atop it and put them through a series of examinations -- balance on your left foot, balance on your right foot, with your feet together put out your arm and slowly bring it to your nose. . . . Yes, it may resemble to some extent a DUI test administered by police. But, again, specialists are finding more often that vertigo and vestibular problems, related to the eyes and inner-ears for balance, are a leading symptom.