

Head Injury Care and Return To Play Guidelines

Head injuries are much different than injuries to other parts of the body, and therefore need to be treated in a different manner. Scientific studies show that brain injuries in children and adolescents take longer to heal than those same injuries in adults.

The following are guidelines that are to be followed when an athlete incurs a head injury.

Signs/Symptoms of a Concussion (Include but are not limited to):

Coach/parent observes these signs	Athlete reports these symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Confusion; forgetfulness (forgets plays) *Moves clumsily; answers questions slowly *Shows behavior/personality changes (irritability, depression) *Forgets events prior to and/or after a hit *Loss of consciousness, even temporarily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Headache; sensitivity to light/noise *Feels sluggish, foggy and/or dizzy *Double or fuzzy vision; nausea *Tinnitus (ringing in the ears) *Concentration or memory problems *Change in sleep patterns

If an athlete shows **any** of the above signs, the athlete should **NOT** return to play and an additional evaluation will be performed.

On-field or Sideline Evaluation

- The athlete will be evaluated onsite following the emergency action plan as stipulated by the National Athletic Trainers' Association.
- **IF** no Athletic Trainer is available, the athlete will not return to practice or play. The coach will decide if 911 should be called. The parent(s) should be called and informed of their child's condition. If 911 is called, an athletic administrator should be contacted immediately.
- The player is not to be left alone following the injury. Monitoring of the athlete for deterioration is essential over the initial few hours following the injury.
- The Athletic Trainer and/or the Team Physician (if available) must determine the appropriate disposition of the athlete.

Return To Play Guidelines

- Prior to returning to ANY physical activity (including Physical Education class) the athlete must report to the Athletic Trainer for further evaluation. The athlete should not participate in any physical activity until cleared by the athlete's medical care team.
 - The athlete should receive as much cognitive rest as possible while symptomatic. Limiting television, video games, text messaging and other cognitive activities is highly recommended.
 - District 214 Certified Athletic Trainers will use the ImPACT neurocognitive screening tool to evaluate an athlete's post-injury status. (For more information on this program, please go to www.impacttest.com.) This test will be administered under the direction of a Certified Athletic Trainer according to the prescribed protocol, which has been described below.
- **ImPACT Post-Injury:** The athlete will be given the ImPACT test 24-72 hours after injury, and these scores will be compared to specific athlete's baseline scores OR normative data if baseline is not available. The Athletic Trainer will notify the coach(es) and parents of the status of the athlete.
- **ImPACT Post-Injury 2:** If the athlete still reports having symptoms, at least 5 days must have elapsed since Post-Injury 1 in order for the next post-injury ImPACT exam to be taken. If the athlete reports they are symptom free, then the ImPACT test will be given again. The ImPACT test will be given every 5-10 days, not to exceed 2 tests within a one week period, until the athlete reports he is symptom free, at which time they will be given the ImPACT test. This report, in conjunction with the athlete's medical care team assessment (which may include appropriate athlete-specific OR normative ImPACT scores) will determine that the athlete may begin the following graduated return-to-play program with these considerations:

*Each step should take 24 hours.

*An athlete may not move on to the next step of the sequence if symptoms return.

- **Step 1:** Light aerobic exercise to increase heart rate and blood pressure in the brain.
- **Step 2:** Perform moderate to heavy cardio and/or sport specific drills.
- **Step 3:** Light contact with no head impact activities.
- **Step 4:** Full participation in practice with full contact.
- **Step 5:** If no symptoms return in step 4, AND the ImPACT scores have returned to normal, then the athlete will be cleared to resume play with no restrictions.

If the athlete has symptoms during any of the above steps, then the process returns to the previous step with a minimum of 48 hours of rest before resuming the sequence.

*** For a list of physicians familiar with concussion management programs and neurocognitive testing, please contact your Certified Athletic Trainer.**

The following Resources were consulted in the creation of these guidelines:

“Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport – The 3rd International Conference on Concussion in Sport Held in Zurich, November 2008”; *The American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, May 2009.

“National Athletic Trainers’ Association Position Statement: Management of Sport-Related Concussion”; *The Journal of Athletic Training*, September 2004: Vol.39, No.3, Pgs.280-297

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