

CONCUSSION

Facts for Student Athletes & Parents

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury that:

- *Is caused by a blow to the head or body from contact with another player, hitting a hard surface such as the ground, ice or floor, or being hit by a piece of equipment such as a bat, lacrosse stick or field hockey ball.
- *Can change the way your brain normally works.
- *Can range from mild to severe.
- *Presents itself differently for each athlete.
- *Can occur during practice or competition in ANY sport.
- *Can happen even if you do not lose consciousness.

How can I prevent a concussion?

Basic steps you can take to protect yourself from concussions:

- *Do not initiate contact with your head or helmet. You can still get a concussion if you are wearing a helmet.
- *Avoid striking an opponent in the head. Undercutting, flying elbows, stepping on a head, checking an unprotected opponent, and sticks to the head all cause concussions.
- *Follow your athletics department's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- *Practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- *Practice and perfect the skills of the sport.

What are the symptoms of a concussion?

You can't see a concussion, but you might notice some of the symptoms right away. Other symptoms can show up hours or days after the injury. Concussion symptoms include:

- *Amnesia
- *Confusion
- *Headache
- *Loss of consciousness
- *Balance problems or dizziness
- *Double or fuzzy vision
- *Sensitivity to light or noise
- *Nausea (feeling that you might vomit)
- *Feeling sluggish, foggy or groggy
- *Feeling unusually irritable
- *Concentration or memory problems (forgetting game plays, facts, meeting times)
- *Slowed reaction time

Exercise or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games may cause concussion symptoms (such as headache or tiredness) to reappear or get worse.

What should I do if I think I have a concussion?

Don't hide it: Tell your athletic trainer and coach. Never ignore a blow to the head. Also, tell your athletic trainer and coach if one of your teammates might have a concussion. Sports have injury timeouts and substitutions so that you can get checked out.

Report it: Do not return to participation in a game, practice or other activity with symptoms. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to return to play.

Get checked out: Your team physician, athletic trainer, or health care professional can tell you if you have had a concussion and when you are cleared to return to play. A concussion can affect your ability to perform everyday activities, your reaction time, balance, sleep, and classroom performance.

Take time to recover: If you have had a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have a repeat concussion. In rare cases, repeat concussions can cause permanent brain damage, and even death. Severe brain injury can change your whole life.

ESM RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL

Return to play following a concussion involves a stepwise progression once the individual is symptom free. These steps allow a gradual increase in the volume and intensity of exercise during the return to play process. The process will take several days to complete. A student athlete may not return to full participation until all steps in this process have been completed with the athlete remaining symptom free. The student athlete must remain asymptomatic for 24 hours before moving to the next step.

STEP 1: Rest/No Physical Activity: Once the student athlete is symptom free at rest for 24 hours and has a signed release by the treating clinician, she/he may begin the return to play progression below (provided there are no other mitigating circumstances).

STEP 2: Light Aerobic Activity: Walking/swimming, stationary cycling, 10-15 minutes of exercise, no resistance.

STEP 3: Sport-specific exercise: Running drills, no weightlifting, no head contact.

STEP 4: Non-contact training drills: Progression to more complex training drills; may start progressive resistance training.

STEP 5: Full contact practice: Participation in normal training/practice activities; full exertion.

STEP 6: Return to play: Normal game play, no restrictions.

If any step is failed, the athlete will drop back to the previous step and try to progress after 24 hours of rest. If the athlete continues to have symptoms after failing any 2 steps, the athlete should be referred back to his/her physician.