

Concussion Information for Parents and Student/Athletes

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury (TBI), caused by a direct blow or motion to the head that disrupts the normal function of the brain. This can cause significant and sustained neuropsychological impairments including, but not limited to, problem solving, planning, memory, and/or behavioral problems.

Quick Facts:

- Most concussions do not involve a loss of consciousness.
- One can sustain a concussion without hitting his/her head. A blow to the body can transmit an impulsive force to the brain causing a concussion.
- A clear CT/CAT scan or MRI does not rule out a concussion.

Signs Observed by Others

- Appears dazed, stunned, and disoriented
- Forgets play, confused, short-term memory difficulty
- Exhibits poor balance or coordination
- Answers questions slowly or inaccurately
- Shows behavior or personality change
- Unable to recall events prior

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Headache
- Nausea/vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double vision or changes in vision
- Sensitivity to light, sound, or noise
- Feeling sluggish, foggy, or groggy
- Difficulty concentrating, with short-memory, and/or confusion
- Sleep disturbances
- Irritability

Return to play protocol following a concussion:

Step # 1 – Completion of a full day of normal cognitive activities (attendance at school, studying for tests, watching practice, interacting with peers, using technology) without the re-emergence of symptoms.

Step # 2 – Light aerobic exercise, which includes the use of a stationary bike.

Step #3 – Sports specific exercises. This includes running. No head impact activities. The objective of this step is to add movement and to increase heart rate.

Step #4 – Non-contacting drills such as passing drills, agility drills, throwing, catching, etc.

Step # 5 - Following medical clearance (consultation between health care personnel and student/athlete's physician), participation in sports specific activities.

Step # 6 – Return to full contact practice and/or game activity.

What should a Student/Athlete do if they suspect they have a concussion?

1. **Report it** – to your athletic trainer, coach, school nurse, or parent.
2. **Rest** – Cognitive rest is just as important as physical rest to recover from a concussion. Reading, texting, or playing video games can slow your recovery.
3. **Recover** – Take time to recover. If you have a concussion your brain needs time to heal.

The risks of playing with a concussion: Regardless of the severity, a concussion is an injury that must be taken seriously. The risk of returning when signs or symptoms are still present may result in:

1. **Post Concussion Syndrome** – A neurological disorder, in which the signs and symptoms of a concussion, such as headaches, dizziness, or difficulty concentrating persist over an extended period of time.
2. **Second Impact Syndrome** - A life-threatening, neurological disorder, which can lead to severe impairment and even death. This condition can result if an athlete sustains another blow or jolt to the head while the athlete is still