

NWAC Concussion Information

NWAC member institutions shall have a concussion management plan on file such that a student-athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion shall be immediately removed from practice or competition and evaluated by an athletics healthcare provider with experience in the evaluation and management of concussions. Student-athletes diagnosed with a concussion shall not return to activity for the remainder of that day. Medical clearance shall be determined by the team healthcare provider (e.g., team physician) or his or her designee according to the concussion management plan.

The concussion management plan should ensure that student-athletes are educated and presented with educational materials about the signs and symptoms of concussions. Student-athletes accept responsibility for reporting injuries and illnesses to the institutional medical staff, including signs and symptoms of concussions. Student-athletes must acknowledge, by signing a statement, that they have received information about the signs and symptoms of concussions and that they have a responsibility to report concussion-related injuries and illnesses to a medical staff member.

The concussion management plan should ensure when a student-athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion shall be immediately removed from athletics activities (e.g., competition, practice, conditioning sessions) and evaluated by a medical staff member (e.g., sport medicine staff, team physician) with experience in the evaluation and management of concussions.

The concussion management plan precludes a student-athlete diagnosed with a concussion from returning to athletics activity (e.g., competition, practice, and conditioning sessions) for at least the remainder of that calendar day.

The concussion management plan requires medical clearance for a student-athlete diagnosed with a concussion to return to athletics activity (for example, competition, practice, conditioning sessions) as determined by a team healthcare provider (e.g., team physician) or the physician's designee.

All NWAC coaches shall receive educational material on an annual basis regarding symptoms, signs, and management of concussions. NWAC coaches must recognize and understand their responsibility in referring any student-athlete with signs and symptoms to the medical staff as described in the concussion management plan. All NWAC coaches will need to take the concussion training provided online.

See Appendix A for more information on concussion management

CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

APPENDIX A

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, or TBI, caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that can change the way the brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a fall, colliding with someone else, hitting a hard surface, or being hit by an equipment. Concussions may affect each person differently.

RECOGNIZING A CONCUSSION

Two signs to look for among student-athletes during both games and practices are:

A forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head and;

Any change in the student-athlete's behavior, thinking, or physical functioning.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION

Most people with a concussion recover quickly and fully. But for some people, symptoms can last for days, weeks, or longer. Each person responds differently to a concussion. Those who have a concussion in the past are also at risk of another one and may find that it takes longer to recover if they have another concussion.

Signs observed by coaching staffs:

Appears dazed or stunned	Is confused about assignment or position
Forgets plays	Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
Moves clumsily	Answers questions slowly
Loses consciousness (even briefly)	Shows behavior or personality changes
Can't recall events prior to hit or fall	Can't recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms reported by student-athletes:

Headache or "pressure" in head	Nausea or vomiting
Balance problems or dizziness	Double or blurry vision
Sensitivity to light	Sensitivity to noise
Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy	Concentration or memory problems
Confusion	Does not "feel right"

PREVENTION AND PREPARATION:

Coaches play a vital role in preventing concussions and responding to them properly. All coaches must view the two online videos. The first video is from the CDC and there is brief test administered at the end. Coaches are to take the test and turn the certificate into their Athletic Directors. The second video is on the Lystedt law of Washington. The NWAC would like to thank the CDC, Harborview Medical Center and the University of Washington Physicians for videos.

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/Training/HeadsUpConcussion.html> (certificate must be filed with school)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sEFQkMo_Oe0

Following are some steps coaches can take to ensure the best outcome of student-athletes:

- Educate student-athletes and coaching staff about concussion. Explain your concerns about concussion and your expectations of safe play to student-athletes, staff members, and assistant coaches. Create an environment that supports reporting, access to proper evaluation, and conservative return-to-play.
- Review and practice your emergency action plan for your facility.
- Know when you will have sideline medical care and when you will not for both home and away games.
- Emphasize that protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Review the Concussion Fact Sheet for Student-Athletes with your team to help them recognize the signs of a concussion.
- Insist that safety comes first.
- Teach student-athletes safe-play techniques and encourage them to follow the rules of play.
- Encourage student-athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Encourage student-athletes to immediately report symptoms of concussion.
- Prevent long-term problems. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the previous one (hours, days, or weeks) can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage, and even death.

IF YOU THINK YOUR STUDENT-ATHLETE HAS SUSTAINED A CONCUSSION:

Take him/her out of play immediately and allow adequate time for evaluation by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion. An athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion, both at rest or during exertion, should be removed immediately from practice or competition and should not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional. Sports have injury timeouts and player substitutions so that student-athletes can get checked out.

IF A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED:

Remove the student-athlete from play. Look for the signs and symptoms of concussion if your student-athlete has experienced a blow to the head. Do not allow the student-athlete to just “shake it off.” Each individual athlete will respond to concussions differently.

Ensure that the student-athlete is evaluated right away by an appropriate health care professional. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Immediately refer the student-athlete to the appropriate athletics medical staff, such as a certified athletic trainer, team physician, or health care professional experienced in concussion evaluation and management.

Allow the student-athlete to return to play only with permission from a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion. Allow athletic medical staff to rely on their clinical skills and protocols in evaluating the athlete to establish the appropriate time to return to play. A return-to-play progression should occur in an individualized, step-wise fashion with gradual increments in physical exertion and risk of contact.

Develop a game plan. Student-athletes should not return to play until all symptoms have resolved both at rest and during exertion. Many times, that means they will be out for the remainder of that day. In fact, as concussion management continues to evolve with new science, the care is becoming more conservative and return-to-play time frames are getting longer. Coaches should have a game plan that accounts for this change.

Lystedt Law: Washington State’s concussion law became effective in July 2009. The main provisions apply to school districts and athletic leagues who utilize school district property:

- Removal of any athlete suspected of having a concussion from practice/game under age 18;
- Athletes cannot return to practice/game until evaluated by a licensed physician or their designee trained in the diagnosis and management of concussions and given written medical authorization.

Additional Information

- **NCAA Concussion Fact Sheets and Video for Coaches and Student-Athletes**
www.NCAA.org/health/safety
- **Heads Up: Concussion Tool Kit (CDC)**
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/coaches_tool_kit.html
- **Heads Up Video (NATA)**
Streaming online at www.nata.org/consumer.headsup.htm
 - www.CDC.gov/Concussion

CONCUSSION: A NCAA Fact Sheet for Student-Athletes

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 concussion:

- 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 player 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.

Reference to any commercial entity or product or service on this page should not be construed as an endorsement by the Government of the company or its products or services.

When in doubt, get checked out.

Sources:

- 2011-2012 NCAA Sports Medicine Handbook
- National Center of Disease Control
- CCCAA