

Athlete/Parent/Guardian Concussion Information Sheet and Acknowledgement Form

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that disrupts normal functioning of the brain. . A concussion can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. Concussions are a type of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), which can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally functions. Concussions can cause significant and sustained neuropsychological impairment affecting problem solving, planning, memory, attention, concentration, and behavior.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 300,000 concussions are sustained during sports related activities annually and more than 62,000 concussions are sustained each year in high school contact sports. Second-impact syndrome occurs when a person sustains a second concussion while still experiencing symptoms of a previous concussion. It can lead to severe impairment and even death of the victim.

The Safety in Youth Sports Act signed into law in November of 2011 mandates measures to be taken in order to ensure the safety of student-athletes involved in interscholastic sports in Pennsylvania. It is imperative that athletes, coaches, and parent/guardians are educated about the nature and treatment of sports related concussions and other head injuries. The Act states that:

- A student participating in or desiring to participate in an athletic activity and the student's parent or guardian shall each school year, prior to participation by the student in an athletic activity, sign and return to the student's school an acknowledgment of receipt and review of a concussion and traumatic brain injury information sheet.
- A school entity may hold an informational meeting prior to the start of each athletic season for all ages of competitors regarding concussions and other head injuries, the importance of proper concussion management and how preseason baseline assessments can aid in the evaluation, management and recovery process.
- In addition to students, parents, coaches and other school officials, the informational meetings may include physicians, neuropsychologists, athletic trainers and physical therapists.
- A student who, as determined by a game official, coach from the student's team, certified athletic trainer, licensed physician, licensed physical therapist or other official designated by the student's school entity, exhibits signs or symptoms of a concussion or traumatic brain injury while participating in an athletic activity shall be removed by the coach from participation at that time.
- The coach shall not return a student to participation until the student is evaluated and cleared for return to participation in writing by an appropriate medical professional.
- The governing body of a school entity may designate a specific person or persons, who must be appropriate medical professionals, to provide written clearance for return to participation.
- In order to help determine whether a student is ready to return to participation, an appropriate medical professional may consult any other licensed or certified medical professionals.
- Once each school year, a coach shall complete the concussion management certification training course offered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Federation of State High School Associations or another provider approved by the Department of Health.
- A coach shall not coach an athletic activity until the coach completes a concussion management certification training course.
- The governing body of a school entity shall establish the penalties for a coach found in violation of the requirements of removing a player or returning to play.

Quick facts

- Most concussions do not involve loss of consciousness.
- Athletes who have, at any point in their lives, had a concussion have an increased risk of another concussion.
- Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults.
- You can sustain a concussion even if you do not hit your head.
- A blow elsewhere on the body can transmit an “impulsive” force to the brain and cause a concussion.
- Signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury.

Danger signs

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in a person with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. An athlete should receive immediate medical attention if after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body s/he exhibits any of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other.
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened.
- A headache that not only does not diminish, but gets worse.
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea.
- Slurred speech.
- Convulsions or seizures.
- Cannot recognize people or places.
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless, or agitated.
- Has unusual behavior.
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously).

Signs of Concussions (Observed by Coach, Athletic Trainer, Parent/Guardian)

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Is confused about assignment or position.
- Forgets plays or demonstrates short term memory difficulties.
- Unsure of game, score, or opponent.
- Exhibits difficulties with balance, coordination, concentration, and attention.
- Answers questions slowly or inaccurately.
- Demonstrates mood, behavior or personality changes.
- Unable to recall events prior to or after the hit or fall.

Symptoms of Concussions (Reported by Student-Athlete)

- Headache or “pressure” in head.
- Nausea/vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness.
- Double vision or changes in vision.
- Sensitivity to light and/or sound.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, or foggy.
- Difficulty with concentration and/or short term memory.
- Confusion.
- Just not “feeling right” or “feeling down.”

Why should a student-athlete report their symptoms?

- If an athlete has a concussion, his/her brain needs time to heal. While an athlete's brain is still healing, s/he is much more likely to have another concussion.
- Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes to recover.
- In rare cases, repeat concussions in young athletes can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to their brain. They can even be fatal.

What should a student-athlete do if they think they have a concussion?

- **Don't hide it.** Tell your Athletic Trainer, Coach, School Nurse, or Parent/Guardian.
- **Report it.** Don't return to competition or practice with symptoms of a concussion or head injury. The sooner you report it, the sooner you may return-to-play.
- **Take time to recover.** If you have a concussion your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is healing you are much more likely to sustain a second concussion. Repeat concussions can cause permanent brain injury.

What can happen if a student-athlete continues to play with a concussion or returns to play too soon?

- Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the student-athlete vulnerable to second impact syndrome.
- Second impact syndrome is when a student-athlete sustains a second concussion while still having symptoms from a previous concussion or head injury.
- Second impact syndrome can lead to severe impairment and even death in extreme cases.

What should you as a parent/guardian do if you think your athlete has a concussion?

- If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion notify the school and seek medical attention.
- Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself.
- Keep your athlete out of play until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussions, says s/he is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.
- Rest is the key to helping an athlete recover from a concussion.
- Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games, may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse.
- Remember that after a concussion returning to sports and school is a gradual process that should be carefully managed and monitored by a health care professional.

Should there be any temporary academic accommodations made for student-athletes who have suffered a concussion?

- To recover cognitive rest is just as important as physical rest. Reading, texting, testing—even watching movies can slow down a student-athletes recovery.
- Stay home from school with minimal mental and social stimulation until all symptoms have resolved.
- Students may need to take rest breaks, spend fewer hours at school, be given extra time to complete assignments, as well as being offered other instructional strategies and classroom accommodations.

Student-athletes who have sustained a concussion should complete a graduated return-to-play before they may resume competition or practice, according to the following protocol:

- **Step 1:** Completion of a full day of normal cognitive activities (school day, studying for tests, watching practice, interacting with peers) without reemergence of any signs or symptoms. If no return of symptoms, next day advance.

- **Step 2:** Light Aerobic exercise, which includes walking, swimming, and stationary cycling, keeping the intensity below 70% maximum heart rate. No resistance training. The objective of this step is increased heart rate.
- **Step 3:** Sport-specific exercise including skating, and/or running; no head impact activities. The objective of this step is to add movement.
- **Step 4:** Noncontact training drills (e.g. passing drills). Student-athlete may initiate resistance training.
- **Step 5:** Following medical clearance (consultation between school health care personnel and student-athlete’s physician), participation in normal training activities. The objective of this step is to restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching and medical staff.
- **Step 6:** Return to play involving normal exertion or game activity.

Remember

Concussions affect people differently. While most athletes with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have symptoms that last for days, or even weeks. A more serious concussion can last for months or longer. It’s better to miss one game than the whole season

For more information on Sports-Related Concussions and other Head Injuries, please visit the following websites:

- www.cdc.gov/concussion
- www.gopats.org
- www.biapa.org
- www.brainsteps.net
- www.stopsportsinjuries.org/concussion
- www.ncaa.org/health-safety
- www.concussionwise.com/pennsylvania
- http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/grants_funding/14140/traumatic_brain_injury/666239

Signature of Student-Athlete
Date

Print Student-Athlete’s Name

Signature of Parent/Guardian
Date

Print Parent/Guardian’s Name

References:

1. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): *“Heads Up Tool Kit for Youth Sports”*
2. NCAA: *“Concussion- A Fact Sheet for Student-Athletes”*