

Arlington Public Schools Athletics

Fact Sheet on Concussions for Parents/Guardians

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury caused by a bump or blow to the head or body. A concussion occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted in the skull. It does not have to involve a loss of consciousness. All concussions are serious.

Concussions can occur in any sport, but more frequently in football, basketball, lacrosse, soccer and wrestling. An athlete who is identified with a brain injury will be removed from practice/game and not allowed to return unless cleared by a licensed health care provider. An athlete should not return to physical activity while still experiencing symptoms since the brain is particularly vulnerable to further injury and more permanent damage or even death.

Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

A concussion may have multiple symptoms that may appear immediately after the injury. Other symptoms may take several days or weeks to develop. Concussion symptoms may last a few days to several months. If your child has had a blow or bump to the head, look for these *signs and symptoms of a concussion*:

Signs

- Appears dazed stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- 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

Symptoms

- Can't recall events after hit or fall
- 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"

How Can You Help Your Child Prevent a Concussion?

There are many risks involved in athletic participation, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from a concussion.

- Follow the rules of the sport.
- Use safety equipment, making sure it is appropriate for the activity, fits properly, is maintained, and is worn consistently and correctly.
- Practice good sportsmanship.
- Know the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

What Should You Do if You Think Your Child Has a Concussion?

1. **Seek medical attention immediately.** A health care professional will be able to evaluate your child and determine when it is safe for your child to return to athletic participation and regular activities.
2. **Keep your child out of play.** Concussions require time to heal. Returning to participation too soon and while the brain is still healing puts the child in a vulnerable position for further injury and a second concussion that can be more serious and life-threatening (Second Impact Syndrome).
3. **Tell your child's athletic trainer and/or coach about any concussion.** The athletic trainer and coaches should have knowledge of any concussion (recent or past).

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What Can I Do as a Parent?

- Parents and students should know and be able to recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion.
- Remind your child to tell the athletic trainer and coach if he/she experiences any symptoms of a concussion.
- Remind your child to tell the athletic trainer and coach if he/she suspects that a teammate might be experiencing any signs or symptoms of a concussion.
- Ask teachers to monitor your child's academic progress and behavior since changes could indicate a concussion.
- Report your child's concussion history to the athletic trainer and future coaches as they move to the next season/sport.

When Can a Child Return to Play?

Day of Injury

No member of a school athletic team shall participate in any athletic event or practice the same day he or she is injured and:

- Exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors attributable to a concussion; or
- Has been diagnosed with a concussion.

Following Days

No member of a school athletic team shall return to participate in an athletic event or training on the days after he/she experiences a concussion unless all of the following conditions have been met:

- The student no longer exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, either at rest or with exertion;
- The student is asymptomatic during or after periods of supervised exercise that is gradually intensifying; and
- The student receives a written medical release from a licensed health care provider.

At high school level, the school's athletic trainer has the final authority in deciding if the student-athlete is eligible to return to play.

Graduated Return-to-Play Protocol*

Rehabilitation Stage

1. No Activity
2. Light aerobic exercise
3. Sport-Specific Exercise
4. Non-contact training drills
5. Full contact practice
6. Return to play

Functional Exercise at Each Stage of Rehabilitation

- Complete physical and cognitive rest
- Walking, swimming or stationary cycling keeping intensity at less than 70% of the maximum predicted heart rate
- No resistance training
- Skating drills in ice hockey, running drills in soccer. No head impact activities
- Progression to more complex training drills, e.g. passing drills in football and ice hockey
- May start progressive resistance training
- Following medical clearance participate in normal training activities
- Normal game play

*Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport: Third International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich, November 2008.

IT IS BETTER TO MISS A GAME OR TWO RATHER THAN THE WHOLE SEASON OR MORE.