

*The Minnesota State High School League provides educational opportunities for students through interscholastic athletic and fine arts programs and provides leadership and support for member schools.*



Member of the National Federation of State High School Associations

---

August 25, 2010

TO: Athletic Directors  
Coaches  
Contest Officials

FR: Craig Perry *C.P.P.*  
Kevin Merkle *K.M.*

RE: Implementation of NFHS Playing Rules Changes Related to Concussion and Concussed Athletes

In its various sports playing rules, the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS) has implemented a standard rule change in all sports dealing with concussions in student-athletes. The basic rule in all sports (which may be worded slightly different in each rule book states:

*Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as the loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional."*

The attached document identifies the specific protocols to implement this change.

Additionally, the MSHSL Sports Medicine Advisory Committee highly recommends that every coach, official, student-athlete and parent should successfully complete the 20 minute NFHS online course *Concussion in Sports—What You Need to Know*. The course can be accessed at: [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com)

These protocols shall be in place for all levels of MSHSL sponsored athletic programs.



## Minnesota State High School League

### IMPLEMENTATION OF NFHS PLAYING RULES CHANGES RELATED TO CONCUSSION AND CONCUSSED ATHLETES

In its various sports playing rules, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) has implemented a standard rule change in all sports dealing with concussions in student-athletes. The basic rule in all sports (which may be worded slightly different in each rule book) states that:

*“Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.”*

The MSHSL Sports Medicine Advisory Committee highly recommends that every coach, official, student-athlete and parent should successfully complete the 20 minute NFHS online course *Concussion in Sports—What You Need to Know*. The course can be accessed at: [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com)

To implement this rule change, the MSHSL has identified the following protocol.

#### The role of contest officials in administering the new rule change

- Officials are to review and know the signs and symptoms of a concussion and immediately remove any athlete who displays the following signs or symptoms from the contest.
  - Headache
  - Fogginess
  - Difficulty concentrating
  - Easily confused
  - Slowed thought processes
  - Difficulty with memory
  - Nausea
  - Lack of energy, tiredness
  - Dizziness, poor balance
  - Blurred vision
  - Sensitive to light and sounds
  - Mood changes – irritable, anxious or tearful

#### Only an Appropriate Health Care Professional can decide if an athlete has been concussed (has had a concussion)

- An Appropriate Health Care Professional is empowered to make on site determination that an athlete has received concussion. An Appropriate Health Care Professional (AHCP) is defined as a medical professional functioning within the levels of their medical education, medical training, and medical licensure.
- If the Appropriate Health Care Professional has determined that an athlete has been concussed, that decision is final and the athlete must be removed from all competition for the remainder of that day.
- If the event continues over multiple days, the designated event AHCP has ultimate authority regarding any return to play decision during the event.

#### Procedure to follow if an official has removed an athlete and the AHCP has determined the athlete does not have a concussion

- If it is confirmed by the school's designated AHCP that the athlete was removed from competition but did not sustain a concussion, the head coach may so advise the officials during an appropriate stoppage of play, and the athlete may reenter competition pursuant to the contest rules.

#### Procedure regarding an authorization to return to practice/competition in the sport

- Once a concussion has been diagnosed by an AHCP, only an AHCP can authorize a subsequent return to play.
  - a) The clearance must be in writing;
  - b) The clearance may not be on the same date on which the athlete was removed from play; and
  - c) The form must be kept on file in the school's athletic office.
  - d) A parent cannot authorize the return to play for his or her child, even if the parent is also an AHCP.
- The school administration shall notify the coach regarding the concussed athlete's permission to return to play.

#### Fundamental reminder about this change

- It has always been the ultimate responsibility of the coaching staff, in all sports, to ensure that players are allowed to compete in practice or contests only if they are physically capable of doing so.

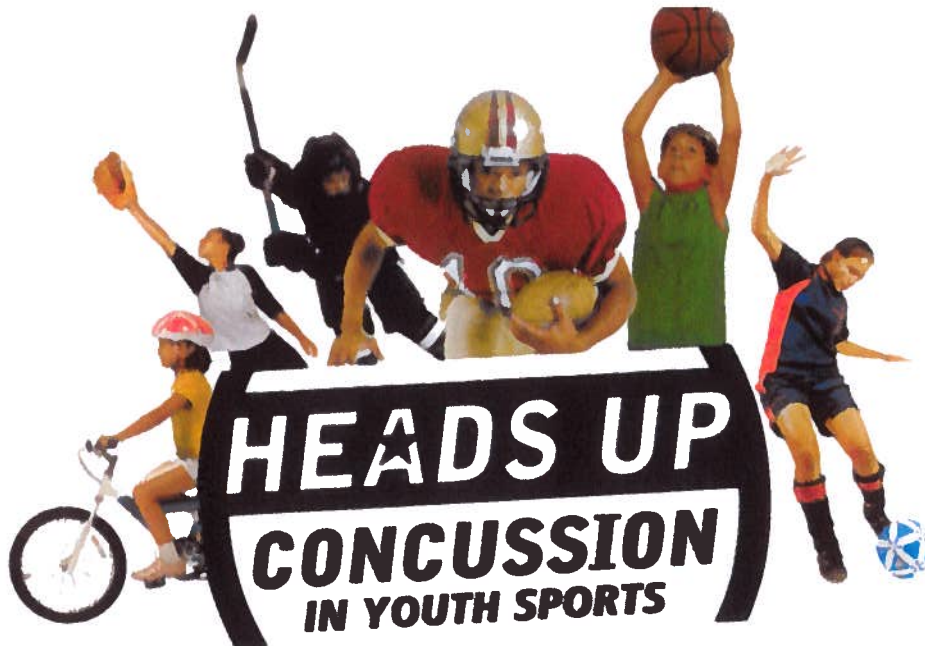
### WHEN IN DOUBT...SIT THEM OUT

#### MSHSL Tournament Series

- In cases where an assigned MSHSL tournament physician is present, his or her decision regarding an athlete's ability to return to competition shall not be overruled by any other AHCP.

#### NFHS suggested Concussion Management Guidelines for Health Care Professionals if the athlete has been concussed on the day of competition

1. No athlete should Return to Play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an AHCP that day.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an AHCP prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon the return of any signs or symptoms.



## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

These signs and symptoms may indicate that a concussion has occurred.

SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF	SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE
Appears dazed or stunned	Headache or "pressure" in head
Is confused about assignment or position	Nausea or vomiting
Forgets sports plays	Balance problems or dizziness
Is unsure of game, score, or opponent	Double or blurry vision
Moves clumsily	Sensitivity to light
Answers questions slowly	Sensitivity to noise
Loses consciousness (even briefly)	Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
Shows behavior or personality changes	Concentration or memory problems
Can't recall events prior to hit or fall	Confusion
Can't recall events after hit or fall	Does not "feel right"

## ACTION PLAN

If you suspect that a player has a concussion, you should take the following steps:

1. Remove athlete from play.
2. Ensure athlete is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional. Do not try to judge the seriousness of the injury yourself.
3. Inform athlete's parents or guardians about the known or possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion.
4. Allow athlete to return to play **only** with permission from an appropriate health care professional.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

FILL IN THE NAME AND NUMBER OF YOUR LOCAL HOSPITAL(S) BELOW:

Hospital Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**For immediate attention, CALL 911**

*If you think your athlete has sustained a concussion... take him/her out of play, and seek the advice of a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.*

For more information and to order additional materials **free-of-charge**, visit:  
[www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports](http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports)