

Loudoun County Public Schools

Division of Athletics



Concussions in High School Sports—Guidelines for Parents, Athletes, & Coaches

IMPORTANT INFORMATION—READ CAREFULLY

INTRODUCTION:

Effective July 1, 2011, the Code of Virginia was amended to include Section 22.1-271.5 directing Virginia school divisions to develop and distribute guidelines for policies dealing with concussions in student-athletes, and requiring LCPS to obtain written acknowledgment of information regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student athletes.

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

- A concussion is a brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, face, neck, or body which results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function. A concussion occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull. An athlete **does not** have to lose consciousness to suffer a concussion.

CONCUSSION FACTS:

- Concussions occur most frequently in football, but girls' lacrosse, girls' soccer, boys' lacrosse, wrestling and girls' basketball follow closely behind. **All athletes are at risk.**
- Concussion symptoms may last from a few days to several months.
- A concussion can affect a student's ability to do schoolwork and other activities.
- An athlete may not return to sports while still having symptoms from a concussion as they are at risk for prolonged symptoms and further injury.
- A concussion may cause multiple symptoms. Many symptoms appear immediately after the injury, while others may develop over the next several days or weeks.
- Most athletes who experience a concussion can recover completely as long as they do not return to play prematurely. The effects of repeated concussions can be cumulative, and after a concussion, there is a period in which the brain is particularly vulnerable to further injury. If an athlete sustains a second concussion during this period, the risk of permanent brain injury increases significantly and the consequences of a seemingly mild second concussion can be very severe, and even result in death (i.e., "second impact syndrome").

CONCUSSION SIGNS OBSERVED BY PARENTS, COACHES, AND STUDENTS:

- Athlete appears dazed or stunned.
- Is confused about what to do.
- Forgets plays.
- Is unsure of game, score or opponent.
- Moves clumsily.
- Loses consciousness.
- Shows behavior or personality changes.
- Can't recall events prior to hit.
- Can't recall events after hit.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION:

- Athlete feels Headache or "pressure" in head.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Balance problems or dizziness.
- Double or fuzzy vision.
- Bothered by light or noise.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy.
- Concentration or memory problems.
- Confusion.

ACTIONS IF A STUDENT ATHLETE SUFFERS A SUSPECTED CONCUSSION EVENT:

- Immediately remove the student from play, be it a game or practice.
- Continuing to participate in physical activity after a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, an increased risk for further injury, and even a risk of death.
- Have a medical professional diagnose the individual.
- **WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT.**

WHEN CAN A STUDENT ATHLETE RETURN TO PLAY OR PRACTICE ACTIVITIES?

- Athletes **may not return to play or practice** on the same day after suffering a concussion.
- Athletes **must be evaluated** by a health care professional and **be cleared** before returning to play or practice.
- Once cleared, the athlete may proceed with activities in a **step-wise fashion** to allow the brain to re-adjust to exertion.

STEPS THE STUDENT ATHLETE MUST FOLLOW AFTER CLEARANCE BY A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL:

If symptoms occur during any of the following steps, the **athlete must cease activity** and be **re-evaluated and cleared by their health care provider.**

- **Step 1** – Light exercise, including walking or riding an exercise bike. No weight lifting.
- **Step 2** – Running in the gym or on the field. No helmet or other equipment.
- **Step 3** – Non-contact training drills in full equipment. Weight training can begin.
- **Step 4** – Full contact practice or training.
- **Step 5** – Game play.

WHAT MUST BE DONE BY STUDENT ATHLETES, PARENTS, AND COACHES?

- **All parties must** learn to recognize the “Signs and Symptoms” of concussion as listed above.
- Teach student athletes to immediately inform the Athletic Trainer and coach if they experience such symptoms.
- Teach student athletes to tell the Athletic Trainer and coach if they suspect that a teammate has a concussion.
- Ask teachers to monitor any decrease in grades or changes in behavior that could indicate a concussion.
- Report concussions to the Athletic Trainer and coaches to help in monitoring injured athletes as they move to the next sports season.

REST IS THE BEST TREATMENT FOR A CONCUSSION

Please acknowledge your receipt, understanding, and agreement with this important information by signing below.

I have read, fully understand, and agree to the above Loudoun County Public Schools guidelines regarding Student Athlete Concussions.

Student Athlete Name (print):

Student Athlete Signature:

Date:

Parent/Guardian Name (print):

Parent/Guardian Signature:

Date:

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