

# OSAA Concussion Information Sheet

## What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury in which trauma to the head results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function. The injury occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a direct or indirect force.

## Concussion Facts

- It is estimated that over 800 high school athletes in our state suffer a concussion each year.
- Concussions occur most frequently in Football, but Girls' Soccer, Boys' Soccer, and Girls' Basketball follow closely behind. All athletes are at risk.
- An athlete does not have to lose consciousness ("knocked-out") to suffer a concussion.
- A concussion is a traumatic injury to the brain.
- Concussion symptoms may last for several days to months.
- Concussions can cause symptoms which interfere with school, work, and social life.
- An athlete should not return to sports when still having symptoms from a concussion as they are at risk for prolonging 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. The symptoms may be subtle and are often difficult to fully recognize.

## What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF
Appears dazed or stunned
Is confused about assignment
Forgets plays
Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
Moves clumsily
Answers questions slowly
Loses consciousness
Shows behavior or personality changes
Can't recall events prior to hit
Can't recall events after hit

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE
Headache
Nausea
Balance problems or dizziness
Double or fuzzy vision
Sensitivity to light or noise
Feeling sluggish
Feeling foggy or groggy
Concentration or memory problems
Confusion

## **When can an athlete return to play?**

After suffering a concussion, **no athlete should return to play or practice on that same day**. Previously, athletes were allowed to return to play if their symptoms resolved within 15 minutes of the injury. Studies have shown us that the young brain does not recover that quickly, thus the **OSAA has established a rule that no player shall return to play following a concussion on that same day** and the athlete must be cleared by an appropriate health care professional before they are allowed to return to play or practice.

Once an athlete is cleared to return to play they should proceed with activity in a step-wise fashion to allow their brain to re-adjust to exertion. The athlete may complete a new step each day. The return to play schedule should proceed as below following medical clearance:

**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.

**\*\*If symptoms occur at any step, the athlete should cease activity and be reevaluated by their health care provider.**

## **How can a concussion affect schoolwork?**

Following a concussion, many athletes will have difficulty in school. These problems may last from days to months and often involve difficulties with short and long-term memory, concentration, and organization.

In many cases it is best to lessen the athlete's class load early on after the injury. This may include no classes for a few days, or a lightened schedule for a longer period of time. Decreasing the stress on the brain early on after a concussion may lessen symptoms and shorten the recovery time.

## **What can you do?**

- Learn to recognize the Signs and Symptoms of concussion
- Emphasize to players, staff, and parents your concerns and expectations about concussion and safe play.
- Remind athletes to tell coaching staff if they suspect that a teammate has a concussion.
- Monitor sports equipment for safety, fit, and maintenance.
- Enlist teachers to monitor any decrease in grades or changes in behavior that could indicate concussion.
- Report concussions that occurred during the school year to appropriate school staff. This will help in monitoring injured athletes as they move to the next season's sports.

This information has been adapted from the CDC's "Heads Up: Concussion in High School Sports" materials by the OSAA's Medical Aspects of Sports Committee. Please go to [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches\\_Tool\\_kit.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches_Tool_kit.htm) for more information.

If you have any further questions, regarding concussions in high school athletes, the use of computerized neurologic testing like *ImPACT*, or want to know how to find a concussion specialist please contact Michael C. Koester, MD, ATC at [Michael.koester@slocumcenter.com](mailto:Michael.koester@slocumcenter.com)

# OSAA Sideline Concussion Guide

## Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

One or more of these signs and symptoms may indicate that an athlete has a concussion. Any of the symptoms listed in this table should be taken seriously. Athletes who experience these signs or symptoms after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head should be kept from play until cleared by a health care professional.

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Answers questions slowly
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Shows behavior or personality changes
Can't recall events prior to hit
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SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE
Headache
Nausea
Balance problems or dizziness
Double or fuzzy vision
Sensitivity to light or noise
Feeling sluggish
Feeling foggy or groggy
Concentration or memory problems
Confusion

## When a Concussion Occurs

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, take the following steps:

1. **Immediately remove the athlete from play.** Athletes who experience signs or symptoms of concussion should not be allowed to return to play.  
“When in doubt, keep them out!”
2. **Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional.** Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself.
3. **Inform the athlete’s parents or guardians about the known or possible concussion.** Make sure they know that the athlete should be seen by a health care professional.
4. **Allow the athlete to return to play only with permission from an appropriate health care professional.** Any athlete who continues to have signs or symptoms upon return to activity must be removed from play and re-evaluated by their health care provider.

This information has been adapted from the CDC’s “Heads Up: Concussion in High School Sports” materials by the OSAA’s Medical Aspects of Sports Committee. Please go to [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches\\_Tool\\_kit.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches_Tool_kit.htm) for more information.

**\*\*We recommend that you attach this paper to a clipboard or binder to have at all times.\*\***