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Student Athlete Concussions and Head Injuries

Dear Parents of Student Athletes,

The Illinois state legislature has passed legislation stating that all student athletes suspected of having a concussion need to be removed from the game or practice immediately. No athlete may return to play after a concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance. Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours. This new policy requires athletes **to provide the school with written clearance from their physician prior to returning to play or practice following a concussion.**

A concussion is a brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, **all concussions are potentially serious and should be managed properly.** For more information you can go to: <http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports>.

Enclosed is a *Parent/Athlete Concussion Information Sheet* that discusses the signs and symptoms of concussions. **All student athletes and his or her parent/guardian must sign before the student is allowed to participate in a practice or interscholastic competition.** Remember it's better to miss one game than miss the whole season. And when in doubt, the athlete sits out.

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Concussion Information Sheet

A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They are 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 can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. You can’t see a concussion and most sports concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Sign and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear.

Signs Observed by Coaching Staff	Symptoms Reported by Athletes
Appears dazed or stunned	Headache or “pressure” in head
Is confused about assignment	Nausea or vomiting
Forgets an instruction	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 (<i>even briefly</i>)	Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
Shows mood or personality changes	Concentration or memory problems
Can’t recall events <i>prior</i> to hit or fall	Confusion
Can’t recall events <i>after</i> hit or fall	Just not “feeling right” or “feeling down”

When is a student ready to return to school after a concussion?

A student with a concussion should be seen by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion. The student-athlete should be kept out of play and/or school until a healthcare professional says s/he is symptom-free and it’s OK to return to school or sport activities. Rest is key to helping an athlete recover from a concussion. Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse. After a concussion, returning to sports and school is a gradual process that should be carefully managed and monitored by a health care professional.



Parent/Athlete Concussion Information Sheet

What can happen if my child keeps on playing with a concussion or returns too soon?

Athletes with the sign and symptoms of concussion should be removed from play immediately. Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury. There is an increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after that concussion occurs, particularly if the athlete suffers another concussion before completely recovering from the first one. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences. It is well known that adolescent or teenage athletes will often fail to report symptoms of injuries. Concussions are no different. As a result, education of administrators, coaches, parents and students is the key to student-athlete's safety.

If you think your child has suffered a concussion

Any athlete even suspected of suffering a concussion should be removed from the game or practice immediately. No athlete may return to activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance. Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours. **In accordance with state law effective July, 2011, student-athletes are required to provide their school with written clearance from either a physician or a certified athletic trainer prior to returning to play or practice following a concussion.**

You should also inform your child's coach if you think that your child may have had a concussion. Remember it's better to miss one game than miss the whole season. And when in doubt, the athlete sits out.

For current information on concussions you can go to:

<https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/policy/index.html>

Parent/Guardian Printed

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date