

Concussion Procedures

A concussion is type of traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal function of the brain. It occurs when the brain is jostled or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow, bump, or jolt to the head or body. Even minor blows to the head can cause a concussion, and the majority of concussions do not result in loss of consciousness. Indeed, less than 10% of individuals sustaining a concussion lose consciousness. Concussions are also not generally able to be detected through scans or other tests. It is important to remember that there is no such thing as a minor brain injury.

Research now shows that young athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of concussions. These effects can result in short or long-term changes in brain function, or in some cases, death. After a concussion, the brain is vulnerable to further injury and very sensitive to any increased stress until it fully recovers.

Symptoms of Concussions

District personnel are not responsible for diagnosing a student or athlete with a concussion; only a qualified health care provider can diagnose a concussion. District personnel are responsible for recognizing the signs and symptoms of concussions and act immediately when these are present as provided herein.

If District personnel know that a student or athlete received a blow or bump to the head or body, they should remove the student from activities and watch the student/athlete closely to determine if they exhibit any of the following:

- 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
- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about what to do
- 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

Even if District personnel are unaware of a student/athlete sustaining a blow or bump to the head or body, they should act in accordance with these procedures if they observe or hear of a student/athlete exhibiting these symptoms. It is better to error on the side of caution when acting on suspicions of a concussion.

Actions when Concussion is Suspected

District personnel must use their own judgment in determining when they must take action on a suspected concussion. This is will a matter of when the staff member actually suspects a concussion. There may be situations when the student/athlete suffers a significant blow, bump, or jolt to the head, and action should be immediately taken. However, the signs, symptoms, and behaviors of a concussion are not always apparent immediately after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body and may develop over a few hours. Therefore, a student/athlete should be

observed following a suspected concussion and should never be left alone. Because extreme caution should be exercised in the event a concussion is suspected, District personnel should remove students/athletes from participation or play in physical activities until the student/athlete is cleared (“When in doubt, sit them out!”).

There may be rare emergency situations where it may be necessary to seek immediate medical care of a student/athlete suffering a blow, bump, or jolt to the head or body. District personnel must call 911 if the student/athlete loses consciousness, has a decreasing level of consciousness, looks very drowsy or cannot be awakened, if there is difficulty getting his or her attention, irregularity in breathing, severe or worsening headaches, persistent vomiting, or any seizures.

When a concussion is suspected, District personnel must take the following actions:

1. Remove the student/athlete from participation or play in all physical activities.
2. Inform the athlete’s parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them information on concussion.
3. Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.
4. Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until an appropriate health-care professional says he or she is symptom-free and gives the okay to return to activity.

Steps two and three may occur in a different order and/or simultaneously depending on the circumstances. It is important that both steps are followed, regardless of whether they are completed second or third in the order.

Students/athletes are not allowed and must not be encouraged to “tough out” or “play through” a suspected concussion. District personnel is prohibiting from praising students/athletes for playing despite exhibiting symptoms of a concussion. Discipline may be taken against any District staff member that knowingly allows a student/athlete to continue to participate in a physical activity despite consciously recognizing the student/athlete exhibiting symptoms of a concussion or encouraging a student/athlete to continue participation despite complaining of or exhibiting symptoms of a concussion.

Recovery from Concussion

If a student/athlete returns to activity before being fully healed from an initial concussion, the student/athlete is at risk for a repeat concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain has a chance to recover from the first can slow recovery or increase the chance for long-term problems. In rare cases, a repeat concussion can result in severe swelling and bleeding in the brain that can be fatal.

The first step in recovering from a concussion is rest. Rest is essential to help the brain heal. Students/athletes with a concussion need rest from physical and mental activities that require concentration and attention as these activities may worsen symptoms and delay recovery. Students/athletes with concussions often have difficulty in school with short- and long-term memory, concentration and organization.

District personnel shall accommodate students/athletes with a concussion. Such accommodation could include, without limitation, excusal from all physical activities until a medical release is provided, extension of deadlines on projects requiring concentration/attention, shortened or lightened schedule, or allow student/athlete to take breaks or a rest period.

Return to Participation

After suffering a concussion, no student/athlete should return to play or practice or physical activity on that same day. Even if it appears a student’s/athlete’s symptoms have been alleviated within 15 minutes, the student/athlete may not return to participation unless he or she has been released by a qualified health care provider. In order to return to participation in an activity or sport, a student/athlete must be free from any symptoms and obtain a release from a qualified health care provider.

In most cases, the student/athlete should not be allowed to return to full participation in the activity or sport immediately upon release. Instead, District personnel must ensure that the student/athlete proceeds in a gradual step-by-step fashion to allow the student's/athlete's brain and body to re-adjust to exercise. Most students/athletes will be able to progress one step each day/practice. The following program should be implemented for a student's return to full participation; however, such program should be tailored to meet the student's unique injury, condition, and medical release:

- Step 1: Light aerobic exercise- 5 to 10 minutes on an exercise bike or light jog; no weight lifting, resistance training, or any other exercises.
- Step 2: Moderate aerobic exercise- 15 to 20 minutes of running at moderate intensity in the gym or on the field without a helmet or other equipment.
- Step 3: Non-contact training drills in full uniform. May begin weight lifting, resistance training, and other exercises.
- Step 4: Full contact practice or training.
- Step 5: Full game play.

If symptoms of a concussion re-occur, or if District personnel observe concussion signs and/or behaviors at any time during the return to activity program, the student/athlete must discontinue all activity and be re-evaluated by their health care provider.

Staff Training

Athletic Directors, Coaching Staff, and Recess Monitors will complete the online training entitled *Heads Up! Concussion in Youth Sports Training for Coaches* and turn in a copy of their completion certificate to the office. This training must be completed on an annual basis and prior to the beginning of any coaching or supervision duties. The online training can be viewed at: <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/Training/index.html#> .

Athlete Training/Notification

It is recommended that at the beginning of each season the coach dedicate part of one practice to discuss concussions with athletes and the importance of reporting signs and symptoms to the coaching staff.

Resources for students:

- *Keeping Quiet Can Keep you Out of the Game* video
 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=yIqZDbk3M40
- *Concussions: A Fact Sheet for Athletes* handout (GGS Athletic Handbook)

Parent/Guardian Training/Notification

It is recommended that at the beginning of each season, during the parent meeting, the coach and/or athletic directors discuss concussion procedures with parents and the importance of reporting signs and symptoms to the coaching staff.

Resources for students:

- *Keeping Quiet Can Keep you Out of the Game* video
 - http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=uO-ordcPWSU
- *Concussions: A Fact Sheet for Parents* handout (GGS Athletic Handbook)

Facts about Concussions and Brain Injury

About Concussion

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a fall or a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. Doctors may describe a concussion as a “mild” brain injury because concussions are usually not life-threatening. Even so, their effects can be serious.

Concussion Signs and Symptoms

Most people with a concussion recover quickly and fully. But for some people, symptoms can last for days, weeks, or longer. In general, recovery may be slower among older adults, young children, and teens. Those who have had a concussion in the past are also at risk of having another one and may find that it takes longer to recover if they have another concussion. Symptoms of concussion usually fall into four categories:

Thinking/Remembering	Physical	Emotional/Mood	Sleep
Difficulty thinking clearly	Headache	Irritability	Sleeping more than usual
Feeling slowed down	Fuzzy or blurry vision	Sadness	Sleep less than usual
Difficulty concentrating	Nausea or vomiting (early on)	More emotional	Trouble falling asleep
Difficulty remembering new information	Sensitivity to noise or light Balance problems Feeling tired, having no energy	Nervousness or anxiety	

Getting Better

Rest is very important after a concussion because it helps the brain to heal. Ignoring your symptoms and trying to “tough it out” often makes symptoms worse. Be patient because healing takes time. Only when your symptoms have reduced significantly, in consultation with your doctor, should you slowly and gradually return to your daily activities, such as work or school. If your symptoms come back or you get new symptoms as you become more active, this is a sign that you are pushing yourself too hard. Stop these activities and take more time to rest and recover. As the days go by, you can expect to gradually feel better.

Tips to help you get better:

- Get plenty of sleep at night, and rest during the day.
- Avoid activities that are physically demanding (e.g., sports, heavy housecleaning, working-out) or require a lot of concentration (e.g., sustained computer use, video games).
- Ask your doctor when you can safely drive a car, ride a bike, or operate heavy equipment.
- Do not drink alcohol. Alcohol and other drugs may slow your recovery and put you at risk of further injury.

There are many people who can help you and your family as you recover from a concussion. You do not have to do it alone. Keep talking with your doctor, family members, and loved ones about how you are feeling, both physically and emotionally. If you do not think you are getting better, tell your doctor.

For more information please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion/>

Parent/Athlete Concussion Information Sheet

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, or TBI, caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions can occur in any sport or recreation activity. So, all coaches, parents, and athletes need to learn concussion signs and symptoms and what to do if a concussion occurs.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION?

SIGNS OBSERVED BY PARENTS/GUARDIANS OR COACHING STAFF	SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appears dazed or stunned ▪ Is confused about events ▪ Answers questions slowly ▪ Repeats questions ▪ Can't recall events prior to the hit, bump, or fall ▪ Can't recall events after the hit, bump, or fall ▪ Loses consciousness (even briefly) ▪ Shows behavior or personality changes ▪ Forgets class schedule or assignments 	<p><u>Thinking/Remembering:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Difficulty thinking clearly ▪ Difficulty concentrating or remembering ▪ Feeling more slowed down ▪ Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy <p><u>Physical:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Headache or “pressure” in head ▪ Nausea or vomiting ▪ Balance problems or dizziness ▪ Fatigue or feeling tired ▪ Blurry or double vision ▪ Sensitivity to light or noise ▪ Numbness or tingling ▪ Does not “feel right” 	<p><u>Emotional:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Irritable ▪ Sad ▪ More emotional than usual ▪ Nervous <p><u>Sleep*:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Drowsy ▪ Sleeps less than usual ▪ Sleeps more than usual ▪ Has trouble falling asleep <p><i>*Only ask about sleep symptoms if the injury occurred on a prior day.</i></p>

CONCUSSION DANGER SIGNS

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in a person with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. An athlete should receive immediate medical attention if after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body s/he exhibits any of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened
- A headache that not only does not diminish, but gets worse
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Becomes increasingly confused, restless, or agitated
- Has unusual behavior
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

WHY SHOULD AN ATHLETE REPORT THEIR SYMPTOMS?

If an athlete has a concussion, his/her brain needs time to heal. While an athlete's brain is still healing, s/he is much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes to recover. In rare cases, repeat concussions in young athletes can result in brain swelling or permanent damage to their brain. They can even be fatal.

If an athlete reports one or more symptoms of concussion listed above after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, s/he should be kept out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says s/he is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.

Did You Know?

- Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.
- Athletes who have, at any point in their lives, had a concussion have an increased risk for another concussion.
- Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR ATHLETE HAS A CONCUSSION?

If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion, remove the athlete from play and seek medical attention. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says s/he is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.

Rest is key to helping an athlete recover from a concussion. Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games, 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.

Remember

Concussions affect people differently. While most athletes with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have symptoms that last for days, or even weeks. A more serious concussion can last for months or longer.

Student-Athlete & Parent/Legal Guardian Concussion Statement

Because of the passage of the Dylan Steiger’s Protection of Youth Athletes Act, schools are required to distribute information sheets for the purpose of informing and educating student-athletes and their parents of the nature and risk of concussion and head injury to student athletes, including the risks of continuing to play after concussion or head injury. Montana law requires that each year, before beginning practice for an organized activity, a student-athlete and the student-athlete’s parent(s)/legal guardian(s) must be given an information sheet, and both parties must sign and return a form acknowledging receipt of the information to an official designated by the school or school district prior to the student-athletes participation during the designated school year. The law further states that a student-athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from play at the time of injury and may not return to play until the student-athlete has received a written clearance from a licensed health care provider.

Student-Athlete Name: _____

This form must be completed for each student-athlete, even if there are multiple student-athletes in each household.

Parent/Legal Guardian Name(s): _____

We have read the Student-Athlete & Parent/Legal Guardian Concussion Information Sheet.

If true, please check box

After reading the information sheet, I am aware of the following information:

Student-Athlete Initials		Parent/Legal Guardian Initials
	A concussion is a brain injury, which should be reported to my parents, my coach(es), or a medical professional if one is available.	
	A concussion can affect the ability to perform everyday activities such as the ability to think, balance, and classroom performance.	
	A concussion cannot be “seen.” Some symptoms might be present right away. Other symptoms can show up hours or days after an injury.	
	I will tell my parents, my coach, and/or a medical professional about my injuries and illnesses.	N/A
	If I think a teammate has a concussion, I should tell my coach(es), parents, or licensed health care professional about the concussion.	N/A
	I will not return to play in a game or practice if a hit to my head or body causes any concussion-related symptoms.	N/A
	I will/my child will need written permission from a licensed health care professional to return to play or practice after a concussion.	
	After a concussion, the brain needs time to heal. I understand that I am/my child is much more likely to have another concussion or more serious brain injury if return to play or practice occurs before concussion symptoms go away.	
	Sometimes, repeat concussions can cause serious and long-lasting problems.	
	I have read the concussion symptoms on the Concussion fact sheet.	

Signature of Student-Athlete

Date

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Date

Concussions: A Fact Sheet for Athletes

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that:

- Is caused by a bump or blow to the head
- Can change the way your brain normally works
- Can occur during practices or games in any sport
- Can happen even if you haven't been knocked out
- Can be serious even if you've just been "dinged"

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light
- Bothered by noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Difficulty paying attention
- Memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

- Tell your coaches and your parents. Never ignore a bump or blow to the head even if you feel fine. Also, tell your coach if one of your teammates might have a concussion.
- Get a medical checkup. A doctor or health care professional can tell you if you have a concussion and when you are OK to return to play.
- Give yourself time to get better. If you have had a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have a second concussion. Second or later concussions can cause damage to your brain.
- It is important to rest until you get approval from a doctor or health care professional to return to play.

HOW CAN I PREVENT A CONCUSSION?

- Every sport is different, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.
- Follow your coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Use the proper sports equipment, including personal protective equipment (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). In order for equipment to protect you, it must be:
 - The right equipment for the game, position, or activity
 - Worn correctly and fit well
 - Used every time you play

**Remember, when in doubt, sit out!
It's better to miss one game than the whole season!**

For more information please visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion/>

Concussions: A Fact Sheet for Parents

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump or blow to the head. 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. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians

If your child has experienced a bump or blow to the head during a game or practice, look for any of the following signs and symptoms of a concussion:

- Appears dazed or 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
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- 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?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from concussion.

- Ensure that they follow their coach's rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, shin guards, and eye and mouth guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Learn the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION?

1. Seek medical attention right away. A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports.

2. Keep your child out of play. Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play until a health care professional says it's OK. Children who return to play too soon—while the brain is still healing—risk a greater chance of having a second concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting your child for a lifetime.
3. Tell your child's coach about any recent concussion. Coaches should know if your child had a recent concussion in ANY sport. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell the coach.

Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!
It's better to miss one game than the whole season!

LINKS TO OTHER RESOURCES

- CDC –Concussion in Sports
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/sports/index.html>
- National Federation of State High School Association/ Concussion in Sports - What You Need To Know
 - www.nfhslearn.com
- Montana High School Association – Sports Medicine Page
 - <http://www.mhsa.org/SportsMedicine/SportsMed.htm>