



# CONCUSSION IN SPORTS

## A Fact Sheet for COACHES and TEACHERS

### THE FACTS

- A concussion is a **brain injury**.
- All concussions are **serious**.
- Concussions can occur **without** loss of consciousness.
- Concussions can occur **in any sport**.
- Recognition and proper management of concussions when they **first occur** can help prevent further injury or even death.



### WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally work. A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions can also result from a fall or from players colliding with each other or with obstacles, such as a goalpost.

The potential for concussions is greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common. Concussions can occur, however in **any** organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity.

### INSIST THAT SAFETY COMES FIRST

- ✓ Teach athletes safe playing techniques and encourage them to follow the rules of play.
- ✓ Encourage athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- ✓ Make sure athletes 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.
- ✓ Review the athlete fact sheet with your team to help them recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

### SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets sports plays
- 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"



Athletes who experience any of these signs or symptoms after a bump or blow to the head should be kept from play until given permission to return to play by a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can last from several minutes to days, weeks, months, or even longer in some cases.

**\*\*\*REMEMBER, you can't see a concussion and some athletes may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury. If you have any suspicion that your athlete has a concussion, you should keep the athlete out of the game or practice.**

## PREVENTION AND PREPARATION

As a coach, you can play a key role in preventing concussions and responding to them properly when they occur. Here are the important steps you can take to ensure the best outcome for your athletes and the team:

### 1. Educate athletes and parents about concussion.

Talk with athletes and their parents about the dangers and potential long-term consequences of concussion. For more information on long-term effects of concussion view the informational video at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com), "**Concussion in Sports - What You Need to Know.**"

<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/concussion-in-sports-2>

Explain your concerns about concussion and your expectations of safe play to athletes, parents, and assistant coaches. Pass out the concussion fact sheets for athletes and parents at the beginning of the season and again if a concussion occurs.

### 2. Read New Mexico's Senate Bill 38:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/Sessions/17%20Regular/final/SB0038.pdf>

### 3. View the additional resources:

<http://www.nfhs.org/resources/sports-medicine>

<http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html>

<http://www.stopsportsinjuries.org/concussion.aspx>

<http://www.ncaa.org/health-and-safety/medical-conditions/concussions>



## SEEK EMERGENCY CARE

The following situations indicate a medical emergency and require activation of the Emergency Medical System:

1. Any athlete with a witnessed loss of consciousness of any duration should be spine boarded and transported immediately to nearest emergency department via emergency vehicle.
2. Any athlete who has symptoms of a concussion, and who is not stable (i.e. condition is worsening), is to be transported immediately to the nearest emergency department via emergency vehicle.
3. An athlete who exhibits any of the following symptoms should be transported immediately to the nearest emergency department, via emergency vehicle.
  - deterioration of neurological function
  - decreasing level of consciousness
  - decrease of irregularity in respirations
  - any signs or symptoms of associated injuries, spine or skull fracture, or bleeding
  - mental status changes: lethargy, difficulty maintaining arousal, confusion or agitation
  - seizure activity



## RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES UNDER SB38

1. Remove immediately from activity when signs/symptoms are present.
2. Must not return to full activity prior to a minimum of 240 hours (10 days).
3. Release from medical professional required for return.
4. Follow school district's return to play guidelines.
5. Coaches continue to monitor for signs/symptoms once athletes return to activity.





## Teach athletes and parents that it's not smart to play with a concussion.

Sometimes players and parents wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Don't let athletes persuade you that they're "just fine" after they have sustained any bump or blow to the head. Ask if players have ever had a concussion.

## Prevent long-term problems.

A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first- usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks) - can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage, and even death. This more serious condition is called *second impact syndrome*. Keep athletes with known or suspected concussion from play until they have been evaluated and given permission to return to play by a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion. Remind your athletes: "It's better to miss one game than the whole season." Students will need cognitive rest from the classroom, testing, cell phones, etc.



## **SIGNATURE**

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the attached NMAA's *Concussion in Sports Fact Sheet for Coaches*. I also acknowledge and I understand the risks of brain injuries associated with participation in school athletic activity, and I am aware of the State of New Mexico's Senate Bill 38; Concussion Law.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Coach's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*All signature acknowledgements to be kept on file with your school's athletic director.*