

CONCUSSIONS AND STUDENT ATHLETES

Code JLCEF-R Issued 3/16/22

Definition

As defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, face or neck that can change the way the brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Proper management is essential to the immediate safety and long-term future of the injured individual. A concussion can be difficult to diagnose, and failing to recognize the signs and symptoms in a timely fashion can have dire consequences.

Signs of concussion

The following signs of a concussion in a student athlete may be observed by a coach, athletic trainer, game official, school/team physician, school nurse, physical therapist, teacher, team member or parent/legal guardian.

- appears dazed, stunned or disoriented; demonstrates decreased alertness
- forgets plays or demonstrates short-term memory difficulty
- slurs words
- exhibits difficulties with balance or coordination
- answers questions slowly or inaccurately
- exhibits seizures or vomiting
- changes in level of consciousness

Symptoms of concussion

The following symptoms of concussion may be reported by the student athlete to a coach, athletic trainer, game official, school/team physician, school nurse or physical therapist.

- headache
- nausea
- balance problems or dizziness
- double vision or changes in vision
- sensitivity to light or sound/noise
- feeling sluggish or foggy
- difficulty with concentration and short-term memory
- sleep disturbance

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- irritability or changes in personality and behavior

Concussion management

Evaluation

If a coach, athletic trainer, game official or physician suspects that a student athlete, under the control of the coach, athletic trainer, official or physician, has sustained a concussion or brain injury in a practice or in an athletic competition, the student athlete will be removed from practice or competition at that time.

- A student athlete displaying signs or symptoms of concussion will be evaluated by a healthcare provider as outlined in state law (physician, athletic trainer, nurse practitioner or physician assistant).
- If no approved healthcare provider is available, the student athlete will not be returned to participation until evaluation by an approved healthcare provider can be conducted.
- A healthcare provider must use a standardized concussion assessment instrument.

Return to play (RTP)

A student athlete who has been removed from play may return to play if, as a result of evaluating the student athlete on site, the athletic trainer, physician, physician assistant (pursuant to scope of practice guidelines) or nurse practitioner (pursuant to a written protocol) determines in his/her best professional judgment that the student athlete does not have any signs or symptoms of a concussion or brain injury.

Procedures

A student athlete who has been removed from play and evaluated and who is suspected of having a concussion or brain injury may not RTP until the student athlete has received written medical clearance by a physician.

Any student athlete determined to be concussed may not RTP on the same day of injury.

The parent/legal guardian of a student athlete determined to be concussed will be contacted and counseled regarding management of the injury.

A student athlete who has been cleared to RTP must follow an appropriate graduated RTP protocol as well as any specific instructions concerning classroom work.

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