

## **Sports-Related Concussion and Head Injury Fact Sheet and Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement Form**

A concussion is a brain injury that can be caused by a blow to the head or body that disrupts normal functioning of the brain. Concussions are a type of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), which can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally functions. Concussions can cause significant and sustained neuropsychological impairment affecting problem solving, planning, memory, attention, concentration, and behavior.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 300,000 concussions are sustained during sports related activities nationwide, and more than 62,000 concussions are sustained each year in high school contact sports. Second-impact syndrome occurs when a person sustains a second concussion while still experiencing symptoms of a previous concussion. It can lead to severe impairment and even death of the victim.

Legislation (P.L. 2010, Chapter 94) signed on December 7, 2010, mandated measures to be taken in order to ensure the safety of K-12 student-athletes involved in interscholastic sports in New Jersey. It is imperative that athletes, coaches, and parent/guardians are educated about the nature and treatment of sports related concussions and other head injuries. The legislation states that:

- All Coaches, Athletic Trainers, School Nurses, and School/Team Physicians shall complete an Interscholastic Head Injury Safety Training Program by the 2011-2012 school year.
- All school districts, charter, and non-public schools that participate in interscholastic sports will distribute annually this educational fact to all student athletes and obtain a signed acknowledgement from each parent/guardian and student-athlete.
- Each school district, charter, and non-public school shall develop a written policy describing the prevention and treatment of sports-related concussion and other head injuries sustained by interscholastic student-athletes.
- Any student-athlete who participates in an interscholastic sports program and is suspected of sustaining a concussion will be immediately removed from competition or practice. The student-athlete will not be allowed to return to competition or practice until he/she has written clearance from a physician trained in concussion treatment and has completed his/her district's graduated return-to-play protocol.

### **Quick Facts**

- Most concussions do not involve loss of consciousness
- You can sustain a concussion even if you do not hit your head
- A blow elsewhere on the body can transmit an "impulsive" force to the brain and cause a concussion

### **Signs of Concussions (Observed by Coach, Athletic Trainer, Parent/Guardian)**

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Forgets plays or demonstrates short term memory difficulties (e.g. unsure of game, opponent)
- Exhibits difficulties with balance, coordination, concentration, and attention
- Answers questions slowly or inaccurately
- Demonstrates behavior or personality changes
- Is unable to recall events prior to or after the hit or fall

### **Symptoms of Concussion (Reported by Student-Athlete)**

- Headache
- Nausea/vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double vision or changes in vision
- Sensitivity to light/sound
- Feeling of sluggishness or foginess
- Difficulty with concentration, short term memory, and/or confusion

### **What do you do if they think they have a concussion?**

Athletic Trainer, Coach, School Nurse, or Parent/Guardian.

Do not allow the student-athlete to participate in competition or practice with symptoms of a concussion or head injury. The student-athlete should not return to play until cleared by a health care provider.

If you suspect your student-athlete has a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is healing, it is more likely to sustain a second concussion. Repeat concussions can cause long-term damage.

### **What if a student-athlete continues to play with a concussion or returns to play too soon?**

Continuing to play with signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the student-athlete vulnerable to further injury.

When a student-athlete sustains a second concussion while still having symptoms of a first concussion or head injury, the risk of long-term damage is significantly increased.

Repeated concussions can lead to severe impairment and even death in extreme cases.

### **What academic accommodations should be made for Student-Athletes who have suffered a concussion?**

Academic accommodations are just as important as physical rest. Reading, texting, testing—even watching videos can delay student-athletes' recovery.

Limit screen time and minimal mental and social stimulation until all symptoms have resolved.

Allow for extra rest breaks, spend fewer hours at school, be given extra time to complete assignments, and be offered other instructional strategies and classroom accommodations.

### **What should a student-athlete who has sustained a concussion should complete a graduated return-to-play before returning to practice, according to the following protocol:**

Step 1: One full day of normal cognitive activities (school day, studying for tests, watching videos, etc.) without reemergence of any signs or symptoms. If no return of symptoms, proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Light aerobic exercise, which includes walking, swimming, and stationary cycling, keeping the heart rate below 150 beats per minute. No resistance training. The objective of this step is increased cardiovascular fitness.

Step 3: Moderate aerobic exercise including skating, and/or running; no head impact activities. The objective of this step is to restore cardiovascular fitness.

Step 4: Heavy aerobic exercise (e.g. passing drills). Student-athlete may initiate resistance training.

Step 5: Full participation in normal training activities. The objective of this step is to restore cognitive and physical skills by coaching and medical staff.

Step 6: Full participation in normal exertion or game activity.

For more information on Concussions and other Head Injuries, please visit:

[www.nfhs.org/sports/index.html](http://www.nfhs.org/sports/index.html)

[www.nfhs.com](http://www.nfhs.com)

[www.fety.org](http://www.fety.org)

[www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org)

[www.atsnj.org](http://www.atsnj.org)