

# Head Injury Care and Return to Play Guidelines

## What parents, athletes, coaches and teachers need to know about a concussion

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. An athlete does not have to lose consciousness (be “knocked out”) to have suffered a concussion, and in most cases is not. Head injuries are much different than injuries to other parts of the body and therefore need to be treated in a different manner. Scientific studies show that brain injuries in children and adolescents take longer to heal than those same injuries in adults. The following are guidelines that are to be followed when an athlete suffers a head injury.

## Signs & Symptoms of a Concussion

*Including but not limited to:*

### **Coach, Parent, Teacher, or Teammate observes:**

- Loss of Consciousness, even temporarily
- Appears dazed or stunned
- Appears confused
- Forgets plays/assignments for plays
- Unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Show behavior or personality changes (irritability, depression)
- Can't recall events prior to or after the injury

### **Athlete reports these symptoms:**

- Headache
- Nausea
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double, fuzzy, and/or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Feeling sluggish
- Feeling foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion

Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as the lists above) shall be removed immediately from the event and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional. Only physicians licensed to practice medicine in all its branches in Illinois will be able to “return to play” athletes who are removed who display signs, symptoms, or behaviors indicative of a possible concussion.

The following Resources were consulted in the creation of these guidelines:

“Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport – The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Concussion in Sport Held in Zurich, November 2008”; The American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, May 2009.

“IHSA Protocol for Implementation of NFHS Sports Playing Rule for Concussions”; <http://www.ihsa.org/school/documents/2010-AD-packet.pdf>; pg. 9; accessed August 6, 2010.

“National Athletic Trainers’ Association Position Statement: Management of Sport-Related Concussion”; The Journal of Athletic Training, September 2004: Vol.39, No.3, Pgs. 280-297.

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