

## Concussions

To help ensure the health and safety of student athletes, the following policy provides guidelines and procedures on preventing, recognizing, and responding to a concussion.

**40.1 Concussions.** A concussion is a brain injury caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Concussions can also result from a fall or from collisions between with one or more individuals or with obstacles. As brain injury, concussions are serious.

**40.1.1** Any student athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion including, but not limited to, loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems, shall be immediately removed from the contest or practice and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional.

**40.1.2** When you suspect that a player has a concussion, follow the “Heads Up” 4-step Action Plan:

- Remove the athlete from play.
- Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional.
- Inform the athlete’s parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them information on concussion.
- 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.

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. An athlete should be observed following a suspected concussion and should never be left alone.

**40.2 Appropriate Health-Care Professional (AHCP).** An appropriate health-care professional (AHCP) is an individual who is trained in the diagnosis, evaluation and management of concussions. Such individuals will be a licensed physician (MD, as per Chapter 458, Florida Statutes) or a licensed osteopathic physician (DO, as per Chapter 459, Florida Statutes). Consistent with the American Academy of Neurology and other organizations, It is recommended that an AHCP as defined in Policy 40.2 above or an athletic trainer (ATC, as per Chapter 468, Florida Statutes) is present at all sporting events, including practices, where athletes are at risk for concussion or for those classified as a collision sport, whenever possible.

**40.3 Mechanics for Removal from Athletic Contest.** The FHSAA concussion rule calls for the immediate removal of the participant from the contest or practice. Players, coaches and contest officials should be cognizant of athletes who display signs, symptoms or behaviors of a concussion and immediately stop play for injury evaluation within the rules of the game (the responsibility of the contest official is limited to activities that occur on the field, court, mat, etc.).

**40.3.1 Symptoms Reported by the Athlete**

- 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

**40.3.2 Signs Observed by Other Individuals**

- 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

**40.3.3 Removal.** Once the participant has been removed from a contest due to a suspected concussion, the coach, school and AHCP(s) assumes full responsibility for that athlete's further evaluation and safety. If available, a certified athletic trainer (ATC) under the direct supervision of a MD/DO can assist with the sideline evaluation of a student-athlete when a student-athlete is sent out of a competition or practice, but cannot provide written clearance to return to play (refer to above). If after sideline evaluation, it is determined the athlete does not demonstrate symptoms consistent with a concussion the ATC will follow procedures within a written operational protocol created and signed by a supervising physician to determine return to play. In this situation, the athlete should continue to be monitored for any delayed onset of concussion symptoms and must be removed from activity immediately if signs or symptoms return.

#### **40.4 Return to Play (RTP) Criteria – Recommended Concussion Management**

**40.4.1** No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a suspected concussion. "When in doubt, sit them out!"

**40.4.2** Any athlete suspected of having a concussion must be evaluated by an ACHP (as defined above) as soon as possible and practical.

**40.4.3** Any athlete who has sustained a concussion must be medically cleared by an AHCP (as defined above) prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.

**40.4.4** After evaluation and examination by an AHCP (as defined above), return to play must follow a step-wise protocol as defined by the "Graded Return to Play Protocol" form and under the supervision of an AHCP, athletic trainer, coach or other health care professional (Post Head Injury/Concussion Form).

**40.4.5** A written medical clearance from an AHCP (as defined above) is required for return to competition (Post Head Injury/Concussion – RTP Form).

#### **40.5 Education on Management of Concussions**

**40.5.1 Requirement for Coaches.** All FHSAA member school head coaches and paid/supplemented coaches are required to view the FREE online education course "Concussion in Sports – What You Need to Know". This NFHS concussion course may be viewed online at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com).

**40.5.2 Recommendation.** All member school personnel, contest officials, student-athletes, parents and media are encouraged to educate themselves by viewing the FREE online education course "Concussion in Sports – What You Need to Know". This free NFHS concussion course may be viewed online at [www.nfhslearn.com](http://www.nfhslearn.com).

**40.5.3 Additional Information.** Current and up-to-date information on concussion can be found on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website at:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/youth.html>; and
- <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/highschool.html>.

**40.6 Concussion Release Form.** Each student-athlete and their parent or legal guardian, duly appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction, must submit a release form provided by the association (Form EL3CH – Concussion & Heat Related Illness Information Release Form).

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## **HEAT ACCLIMATIZATION**

Heat illness is a cause for concern for high school student-athletes beginning pre-season practices in the warm, summer months and other times of extreme heat. The most serious heat illness, exertional heat stroke, is one of the leading causes of preventable death in these athletes. Heat production during intense exercise is 15 to 20 times greater than at rest and can raise body core temperature one to two degrees Fahrenheit every five minutes unless heat is dissipated. The following policy provides guidelines and procedures for conducting preseason practices and activities to insure the well-being of student-athletes.

