

CONCUSSION

A Fact Sheet for Coaches

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that:

- Is caused by a blow to the head or body.
 - From contact with another player, hitting a hard surface such as the ground, ice or floor, or being hit by a piece of equipment such as a bat, lacrosse stick or field hockey ball.
- Can change the way your brain normally works.
- Can range from mild to severe.
- Presents itself differently for each athlete.
- Can occur during practice or competition in ANY sport.
- **Can happen even if you do not lose consciousness.**

CIF Bylaw 313 – Play It Safer

A student-athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from competition at that time for the remainder of the day. A student-athlete who has been removed from play may not return to play until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussion and receives written clearance to return to play from that health care provider.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

You can't see a concussion, but you might notice some of the symptoms right away. Other symptoms can show up hours or days after the injury. Concussion symptoms include:

- Amnesia.
- Confusion.
- Headache.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Balance problems or dizziness.
- Double or fuzzy vision.
- Sensitivity to light or noise.
- Nausea (feeling that you might vomit).
- "Don't feel right."
- Feeling sluggish, foggy or groggy.
- Feeling unusually irritable.
- Concentration or memory problems (forgetting game plays, facts, meeting times).
- Slowed reaction time.

Exercise or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games may cause concussion symptoms (such as headache or tiredness) to reappear or get worse.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF I KEEP PLAYING A STUDENT WITH A CONCUSSION OR RETURNS TOO SOON?

Athletes with the signs and symptoms of concussion should be removed from play immediately (CIF Bylaw 313). Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to greater injury. There is an increased risk of significant damage from a concussion for a period of time after that concussion occurs, particularly if the athlete suffers another concussion before completely recovering from the first one. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences. It is well known that adolescent or teenage athlete will often under report symptoms of injuries and concussions are no different. It is your duty as a coach to place the health and safety of your student-athletes ahead of winning.

WHAT A COACH SHOULD DO IF YOU THINK YOUR PLAYER HAS SUFFERED A CONCUSSION

Any athlete even suspected of suffering a concussion **must** be removed from the game or practice immediately. No athlete may return to activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without written medical clearance. The new "CIF Bylaw 313" now requires the consistent and uniform implementation of long and well-established return to play concussion guidelines that help ensure and protect the health of student-athletes. A coach's job is to ensure everyone follows these guidelines.



**IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON.
WHEN IN DOUBT, GET CHECKED OUT.**



For more information and resources, visit www.cifstate.org/health_safety/ & www.cdc.gov/concussion

