

Return to Play Guidelines for Parents

Waxahachie ISD has developed a protocol for managing concussions. This policy includes a multidiscipline approach involving neuropsychological testing, athletic trainer clearance, physician referral and clearance, and successful completion of activity progressions related to their sport. The following is an outline of this procedure. Your son/daughter must pass all of these tests in order to return to sport activity after having a concussion.

1. All athletes who sustain head injuries are required to be evaluated by our team physician or their primary care physician. They must have a normal physical and neurological exam prior to being permitted to progress to activity. This includes athletes who were initially referred to an emergency department.
2. The student will be monitored daily at school by the athletic trainer and school nurse. His/her teachers will be notified of their injury and what to expect. Accommodations may need to be given according to physician recommendations and observations.
3. The student will be given a neurocognitive test 48 - 72 hours after the concussion. All athletes in contact sports will have this assessment prior to their season to form a baseline. Waxahachie ISD utilizes the ImPact software program for this. The athlete's post-injury testing data must be within normal limits before he/she is released to activity.
4. The student must be asymptomatic at rest and exertion.
5. Once cleared to begin activity, the student will start a progressive step-by-step procedure outlined in the Prague statement. The progressions will advance at the rate of one step per day. The progressions are:
 - a. No activity until athlete is symptom free and neurocognitive testing returns to baseline norms.
 - b. Physician clearance to begin activity
 - c. Light aerobic exercise with no resistance training
 - d. Moderate aerobic exercise with no resistance training
 - e. Non-contact training drills with resistance training
 - f. Full contact training drills
 - g. **Note – Athlete progression continues as long as athlete is asymptomatic at current activity level. If the athlete experiences any post concussion symptoms, he/she will wait 24 hours and start the progressions at the previous asymptomatic level.**
6. Once the student has completed steps 1 through 6, he/she may return to their sport activity with no restrictions.

Parental Information

What is a concussion?

A concussion is an injury to the brain. It is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to either the head or the body that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull. The resulting injury to the brain changes how the brain functions in a normal manner. The signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up immediately after the injury or may not appear for hours or days after the injury. Concussions can have serious long-term health effects, and even a seemingly mild injury can be serious. A major concern with any concussion is returning to play too soon. Having a second concussion before healing can take place from the initial or previous concussion can lead to serious and potentially fatal health conditions.

What are the symptoms of a concussion?

Signs and symptoms of a concussion are typically noticed right after the injury, but some might not be recognized until days after the injury. Common symptoms include: headache, dizziness, amnesia, fatigue, confusion, mood changes, depression, poor vision, sensitivity to light or noise, lethargy, poor attention or concentration, sleep disturbances, and aggression. The individual may or may not have lost consciousness.

What should be done if a concussion is suspected?

1. Immediately remove student from practice or game
2. Seek medical attention right away
3. Do not allow the student to return to play until proper medical clearance and return to play guidelines have been followed. The permission for return to play will come from the appropriate health care professional or professionals.

If you have any questions concerning concussions or the return to play policy, you may contact the athletic administrator at your school.

What should the athlete know about playing with a concussion?

Teach athletes it's not smart to play with a concussion. Rest is the key after a concussion. Sometimes athletes, parents, and other school or league officials wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Don't let your athlete convince you that they're "just fine."

What are the risks of returning to activity too soon after sustaining a concussion?

Prevent long-term problems. If an athlete has a concussion, their brain needs time to heal. Don't let them return to play the day of the injury and until a health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussion, says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short time period (hours, days, weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term problems.

What can happen if my child keeps on playing with a concussion?

Athletes with the signs and symptoms of concussion should be removed from play immediately. 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 athletes will often under report symptoms of injuries. And concussions are no different. As a result, education of administrators, coaches, parents and students is the key for student-athlete's safety.