

Florida High School Athletic Association
“CONCUSSION INFORMATION”
(PLEASE DISTRIBUTE TO PARENT/GUARDIAN)

What is a concussion?

Concussion is a brain injury. Concussions, as well as all other head injuries, are serious. They can be caused by a bump, a twist of the head, sudden deceleration or acceleration, a blow or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with force transmitted to the head. You can't see a concussion, and more than 90% of all concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear. All concussions are potentially serious and, if not managed properly, may result in complications including brain damage and, in rare cases, even death. Even a “ding” or a bump on the head can be serious. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of concussion yourself, your child should be immediately removed from play, evaluated by a medical professional and cleared by a medical doctor.

What are the signs and symptoms of concussion?

Concussion symptoms may appear immediately after the injury or can take several days to appear. Studies have shown that it takes on average 10-14 days or longer for symptoms to resolve and, in rare cases or if the athlete has sustained multiple concussions, the symptoms can be prolonged. Signs and symptoms of concussion can include: (not all-inclusive)

- Vacant stare or seeing stars
- Lack of awareness of surroundings
- Emotions out of proportion to circumstances (inappropriate crying or anger)
- Headache or persistent headache, nausea, vomiting
- Altered vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Delayed verbal and motor responses
- Disorientation, slurred or incoherent speech
- Dizziness, including light-headedness, vertigo (spinning) or loss of equilibrium (being off balance or swimming sensation)
- Decreases coordination, reaction time
- Confusion and inability to focus attention
- Memory loss
- Sudden change in academic performance or drop in grades
- Irritability, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, easy fatigability
- In rare cases, loss of consciousness

What can happen if my child keeps on playing with a concussion or returns too soon?

Athletes with signs and symptoms of concussion should be removed from activity (play or practice) immediately. Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves the young athlete especially vulnerable to sustaining another concussion. Athletes who sustain a second concussion before the symptoms of the first concussion have resolved and the brain has had a chance to heal are at risk for prolonged concussion symptoms, permanent disability and even death (called “Second Impact Syndrome” where the brain swells uncontrollably). There is also evidence that multiple concussions can lead to long-term symptoms, including early dementia.

What do I do if I suspect my child has suffered a concussion?

Any athlete suspected of suffering a concussion should be removed from the activity 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 from an appropriate health-care professional (AHCP). In Florida, an appropriate health-care professional (AHCP) is defined as either a licensed physician (MD, as per Chapter 458, Florida Statutes), a licensed osteopathic physician (DO, as per Chapter 459, Florida Statutes) or a licensed nurse practitioner (NP, as per Chapter 464, Florida Statutes). Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours. You should also seek medical care and inform your child's coach if you think that your child may have a concussion. Remember, it's better to miss one game than to have your life changed forever. When in doubt, sit them out.

When can my child return to play or practice?

Following physician evaluation, the **return to activity process** requires the athlete to be completely symptom free, after which time they would complete a step-wise protocol under the supervision of a licensed athletic trainer, coach or medical professional and then, receive written medical clearance of an AHCP.

For current and up-to-date information on concussions, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/concussioninyouthsports/or> <http://www.seeingstarsfoundation.org>

“HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS INFORMATION”

People suffer heat-related illness when their bodies cannot properly cool themselves by sweating. Sweating is the body's natural air conditioning, but when a person's body temperature rises rapidly, sweating just isn't enough. Heat-related illnesses can be serious and life threatening. Very high body temperatures may damage the brain or other vital organs, and can cause disability and even death. Heat-related illnesses and deaths are preventable.

Heat Stroke is the most serious heat-related illness. It happens when the body's temperature rises quickly and the body cannot cool down. Heat Stroke can cause permanent disability and death.

Heat Exhaustion is a milder type of heat-related illness. It usually develops after a number of days in high temperature weather and not drinking enough fluids.

Heat Cramps usually affect people who sweat a lot during demanding activity. Sweating reduces the body's salt and moisture and can cause painful cramps, usually in the abdomen, arms, or legs. Heat cramps may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.

Who's at Risk?

Those at highest risk include the elderly, the very young, people with mental illness and people with chronic diseases. However, even young and healthy individuals can succumb to heat if they participate in demanding physical activities during hot weather. Other conditions that can increase your risk for heat-related illness include obesity, fever, dehydration, poor circulation, sunburn, and prescription drug or alcohol use.