

XII. HORSEHEADS HEAD INJURY AND CONCUSSION FACT SHEET

What is a Concussion? Concussion is a brain injury which results from a bump, blow or jolt to the head. Even a ‘ding’ or bump to the head can be serious. Concussion is an injury that cannot be seen; some of the symptoms can be observed, but some can only be reported by the student. Honesty in reporting symptoms is essential. Second Impact Syndrome (a second blow to the head before full recovery from a concussion) can be dangerous; it can result in permanent brain damage and in rare cases, it can be fatal.

Prevention:

Follow your coach’ rules for safe practices and play; understand the rules of the sport and instill sportsmanship; wear protective equipment properly; be honest in reporting the symptoms of the injury; coaches should be prompt in their recognition of signs of concussions on the sidelines; provide prompt medical treatment and evaluation; finally, return to activity slowly and gradually based on the disappearance of concussion like symptoms.

Signs of concussions that you can recognize: Appears dazed and confused; is confused about the plays or assignment in the game; is unsure of the score or who is the opponent; moves clumsily; answers questions slowly; shows behavior or personality changes; loses consciousness and can’t recall events before and/or after being ‘struck or hit’.

Symptoms reported by the student athlete: Headache; nausea; balance problems or dizziness; double or fuzzy vision; sensitivity to light or noise; feeling sluggish or very tired; feeling groggy or foggy; concentration or memory problems and feeling confused.

What to do if you think your athlete has a concussion: Seek medical attention immediately; keep your athlete ‘out of the game’; tell all of your coaches about any recent concussion and follow doctor ordered restrictions for all sports and activities; remind your student athlete that it is better to ‘miss one game than the whole season’.

Policy on Returning to Physical Education and Athletics Following a Concussion Injury

The coach or athletic trainer will evaluate the athlete on the sidelines – if a concussion is suspected, the student athlete will be taken out of ‘play’ for the remainder of the game/day. The athlete must be evaluated by your private healthcare provider and a note must accompany the athlete with clearly written restrictions listed as to what the student can and cannot do. This note must be submitted to the School Nurse as soon as the student returns to school.

Re-entry to Physical Education class and athletics: Re-entry will be allowed in gradual steps. The student must be free of signs and symptoms for at least 24 hours at each ‘step’ before being released to the following step. The following steps are to be followed in order to be ‘cleared’ to begin participation in both PE class and athletics. There must be six days of care with no signs of injury, in order to be cleared to participate. Each day must be symptom free as follows:

Day 1 = No participation in PE class or any athletic practices (complete rest).

Day 2 = Light aerobic exercise (walking, stationary bike, light resistance training).

Day 3 = Sport specific exercise like running during soccer drills.

Day 4 = Non contact training drills. (After Day 4, a note from the private healthcare provider must be secured and given to the School Nurse before the athlete can be cleared to participate in Day 5 activities. This signature must be obtained by the private health care provider on the daily chart provided by the School Nurse. The athlete must take this form with him/her to their provider’s office for this signature.

Day 5 = Full contact training drills.

Day 6 = Full participation – game play.

Notes – there six days to this procedure therefore a minimum of six days before a student athlete can return to participation. If a symptom re-occurs, during any of these days during this process, a 24 hour wait must happen before moving on to the next step. The premise is that once a concussion has occurred, we want to be sure we place as much rest in between a potential second injury. In other words, the more time that occurs between injuries to the head, the better chance of full recovery for the athlete. Some student athletes will take more time to recover than others in moving through this process. The School Nurse Practitioner (NP), Nurse (RN) and/or the Athletic Trainer (AT) are the only people who can give clearance for the athlete to progress to the next ‘step’. They may ask for input from the coach, athlete, parents and teachers when assessing the student athlete’s progress. At no time, should a student athlete be told to ‘suck it up’ and under report their symptoms. Concussion is a different and much more complex injury and is not like a muscle strain or ache; playing through the pain will increase the risk for more serious brain injury.