

# HEADS UP: Concussion in High School Sports

**The Iowa Legislature passed a new law, effective July 1, 2011, regarding students in grades 7 – 12 who participate in extracurricular interscholastic activities. Please note this important information from Iowa Code Section 280.13C, Brain Injury Policies:**

- (1) A child must be immediately removed from participation (practice or competition) if his/her coach or a contest official observes signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion or brain injury in an extracurricular interscholastic activity.
- (2) A child may not participate again until a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussions and other brain injuries has evaluated him/her and the student has received written clearance from that person to return to participation.
- (3) Key definitions:
  - “Licensed health care provider” means a physician, physician assistant, chiropractor, advanced registered nurse practitioner, nurse, physical therapist, or athletic trainer licensed by a board.
  - “Extracurricular interscholastic activity” means any extracurricular interscholastic activity, contest, or practice, including sports, dance, or cheerleading.

## What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

## What parents/guardians should do if they think their child has a concussion?

1. **OBEY THE NEW LAW.**
  - a. Keep your child out of participation until s/he is cleared to return by a licensed healthcare provider.
  - b. Seek medical attention right away.
2. Teach your child that it's not smart to play with a concussion.
3. Tell all of your child's coaches and the student's school nurse about ANY concussion.

## What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

You cannot see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days after the injury. If your teen reports one or more symptoms of concussion listed below, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, keep your teen out of play and seek medical attention right away.

## STUDENTS:

If you think you have a concussion:

- **Tell your coaches & parents** – Never ignore a bump or blow to the head, even if you feel fine. Also, tell your coach if you think one of your teammates might have a concussion.
- **Get a medical check-up** – A physician or other licensed health care provider can tell you if you have a concussion, and when it is OK to return to play.
- **Give yourself time to heal** – If you have a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. It is important to rest and not return to play until you get the OK from your health care professional.

**IT'S BETTER TO MISS ONE CONTEST THAN THE WHOLE SEASON.**

## Signs Reported by Students:

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not “feeling right” or is “feeling down”

## PARENTS:

### How can you help your child prevent a concussion?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from concussion and other injuries.

- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity. It should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Ensure that they follow their coaches' rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.

## Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall

Information on concussions provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For more information visit: [www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion)

Due to Iowa legislation regarding brain injuries in high school athletics (Iowa Code 280.13C), schools are required to provide and keep on file the corresponding concussion fact sheet. The fact sheet entitled "Heads Up: Concussion in High School Sports" requires both the parent's and student athlete's signature before the student can participate in athletics, dance, or cheer programs. Please read, sign, and return the concussion fact sheet well in advance of the athlete's season of participation.

With a heightened awareness on the prevalence and severity of head injuries in all levels of athletics, the IHSAA and IGSAU have developed a specific return to play (RTP) protocol for athletes who have sustained a concussion. If a student athlete shows ANY sign of suffering a concussion during a practice or game, that athlete CANNOT return to activity during that same day. In order to return to practice or competition the student athlete must be cleared by the school's designated "Licensed Healthcare Provider," and in the protocol of Norwalk High School that individual is the school's Certified Athletic Trainer. The RTP protocol is initiated and progressed under the supervision of the school's Athletic Trainer. Before the student athlete is returned to full activity or competition a written Physician's clearance is required. After a written physician's clearance is received by the school, it is the Athletic Trainer's decision to determine when the athlete can return to full activity based on the progression of the RTP protocol. The RTP protocol is outlined as follows:

**Step 1. Complete physical and cognitive rest. No exertional activity until the athlete is asymptomatic. Complete cognitive rest may include staying home from school if necessary.**

**Step 2. Return to school full time.**

**Step 3. Low impact, light aerobic exercise (walking, jogging, stationary bicycle). No weight or resistance training allowed. This step should not begin until the student athlete is cleared by the athletic trainer.**

**Step 4. Basic exercise (running in the gym or on the field).**

**Step 5. Non-contact, sport specific training drills (in full equipment if applicable). Weight training can begin.**

**Step 6. Following physician's clearance, full contact in practice/training.**

**Step 7. Normal competition in a contest.**

**Note: Each step in the RTP progression should take a minimum of 24 hours. If any concussion symptoms occur during any phase of the progression, the athlete stops all activity and the protocol is initiated again once the athlete has been symptom free for 24 hours. This protocol is a guideline and since every injury is unique and affects each student athlete differently, it can be modified as needed by the supervising Athletic Trainer. Based on the individual's injury and history of concussions, the protocol may be extended for a more conservative treatment of the brain injury.**

**The UnityPoint Health- Norwalk Family Medicine clinic has partnered with Norwalk High School for the development and implementation of the school's concussion management protocols and RTP guidelines.**

**Peter Sand- Norwalk Athletic Trainer    Al Lammers- Norwalk Athletic Director**