



CONCUSSION TRAINING FOR COACHES

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A traumatic injury to the brain that alters mental status or changes the way the brain normally works. It is caused by a blow to the head or body that forces the brain to move rapidly inside the skull.

IDENTIFYING CONCUSSIONS

As an NYSCA coach you have a responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of all your players at all times, so it is imperative that you are always closely watching them and if any of the following signs are observed, or symptoms are reported, that you immediately remove that youngster from play since it may signal that a concussion has been sustained:

Signs observed by coaching staff

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

Symptoms reported by the athlete

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

DANGER SIGNS

If concussion symptoms become more severe you need to call 9-1-1 or have the parent/guardian take the child to the closest hospital immediately.

Athletes who have sustained a concussion can have blood clots form on their brain and squeeze their brain against their skull, which can cause serious damage. The following danger signs represent a medical emergency:

- Headache worsens or doesn't go away
- Weakness or numbness
- Loss or decrease in coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- One pupil larger than the other
- Restlessness
- Unusual behavior
- Increasing confusion or agitation
- Loss of consciousness/drowsiness
- Inability to wake up

LIMITING THE RISK OF CONCUSSIONS

- **Educate parents** – Take time before the season to go over concussion education with your players' parents. Parents can reinforce the rules, safe play procedures and how to wear protective equipment correctly.
- **Educate athletes** – Before the season, provide your players with a list of symptoms they might experience as a result of a concussion. Stress to them to report any bump or blow to their head – even if they feel fine – and it is always best to remove that player from the competition just as a precaution.
- **Teach safe play and good sportsmanship** – You should always educate your athletes to play by the rules and show good sportsmanship toward the opposition; rules are in place to help prevent injuries.
- **Wear the right protective gear** – It is also important to teach your players to wear their protective equipment properly, make sure it fits well, and that it is used every time they play.
- **Strengthen the neck** – This is a relatively new concept in youth sports to help prevent concussions so please consult a physical trainer before beginning any type of strengthening activity.

Did You Know?

- ***A player does not have to be knocked unconscious to have experienced a concussion.***
- ***A concussion can occur in any sport or recreation activity.***
- ***Children do not recover quicker than adults from concussions.***

DEALING WITH A SUSPECTED CONCUSSION

If you suspect one of your players has sustained a concussion you should:

1. Immediately remove the athlete from play if you notice any signs or symptoms of a concussion.
2. Have the athlete checked by a medical professional trained to evaluate concussions.
3. Inform the athlete's parents of any symptoms you observed and remind them that the player must be evaluated by a medical professional.



ALLOWING PLAYERS BACK ON THE FIELD

Make sure that the player has permission from a health care professional with experience in evaluating concussions before they can return to play. If the athlete returns before they are fully recovered and experience a repeat concussion it is often much more severe and can even be fatal.

Resting

Doctors recommend an athlete who has sustained a concussion get as much rest as possible in the days and weeks following the incident. Rest helps the brain recover and heal itself. Resting includes getting plenty of sleep and avoiding physical activity throughout the day. Also, activities such as watching television, playing video games or even homework can cause symptoms to remain, reappear or even get worse. Players returning to play too soon will cause their brain to divert the energy it needs to heal into energy needed for the activity.

Players might try and resist the doctor's and/or parent's orders so be prepared to handle these situations. They might see their friends playing and want to join them but you should:

- Speak with the parent first and find out what diagnosis the doctor gave the player.
- Discuss the situation with the player and his/her parents.
- Talk about the risks involved of them playing too soon.
- Offer support and encouragement that they will get better if they follow the proper recovery procedures outlined by their doctor.

Returning to Play

All athletes must receive written permission from a health care professional with concussion management experience before returning to play. Your player's doctor should also provide an action plan to get your player ready to compete again. Players should be symptom free at rest, as well as while doing any physical or cognitive activities, before attempting a comeback.

Sample Plan

Begin one week after concussion symptoms have stopped. Each step takes approximately one day to complete and a player should only go to the next step if no symptoms have been experienced.

- Step 1:** Walking, light jogging, riding a stationary exercise bike (5-10 min.)
- Step 2:** Moderate jogging and biking, light calisthenics, brief sprinting (20-30 min.)
- Step 3:** Sprinting or running, intense exercise biking, non-contact drills (45-60 min.)
- Step 4:** Full contact practice but in a controlled environment with teammates
- Step 5:** Game activity, assuming no concussion symptoms have been experienced

National Youth Sports Coaches Association

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**Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks
Concussion Training Acknowledgement Form
Coaches Agreement
July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017**

As a Coach it is important to recognize the signs, symptoms, and behaviors of concussions.
By signing this form you are stating that you understand the importance of recognizing and responding to concussions and head injuries.

Coach Agreement:

I have read the Concussion Training for Coaches Information Sheet and understand what a concussion is and how it may be caused. I also understand the common signs, symptoms, and behaviors. I agree that I will remove an athlete from practice or play if the athlete sustains a concussion or if a concussion is suspected.

I understand that it is my responsibility to inform the parents/guardian and the Worcester County Department of Recreation & Parks staff member if I suspect a concussion or if a suspected concussion is reported to me and that the athlete will be removed from the practice or game.

I understand the possible consequences of the athlete returning to practice/play too soon.

Signature of Volunteer Coach

Date

Print Volunteer Coach's Name