

# Township High School District 211

## Head Injury Care and Return to Play/Learn Guidelines



Township High School District 211 recognizes the potential effects a concussion may have on a student. Appropriate management and implementation of a return-to-play/learn is critical for helping students recover from a concussion.

A student/athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion in any activity, practice, or contest shall be removed and evaluated. If a concussion is detected, the student/athlete may not return to activity for any reason, and parents/guardians will be notified. Additionally, the school nurse will be informed of the student's condition so they may notify the teachers of the student/athlete. The student/athlete should not participate in any physical activity until cleared by a physician and/or athletic trainer, and has successfully fulfilled the protocol outlined below.



### Signs/Symptoms of a Concussion (include but are not limited to):

Coach/Parent Observes These Signs	Athlete Reports These Symptoms
Confusion; forgetfulness (forgets plays)	Headache; sensitivity to light/noise
Moves clumsily; answers questions slowly	Feels sluggish, foggy and/or dizzy
Shows behavior/personality changes (irritability, depression)	Double or fuzzy vision; nausea
Forgets events prior to and/or after a hit	Concentration or memory problems
Loss of consciousness, even temporarily	Change in sleep patterns

## Return to Play

### ImPACT Concussion Assessment

**ImPACT Baseline Test:** The baseline test provides a snapshot of how one's brain functions in normal, everyday circumstances. Baseline tests take approximately twenty-five minutes to complete, and are administered every two years by a certified athletic trainer to all athletes. Data from the test for each athlete will be stored electronically, and utilized at a later date for athletes who experience a concussion.

**ImPACT Post-Injury 1:** The athlete will be given the ImPACT test following the injury, but no sooner than 24 hours after the injury. Testing will occur regardless if the student is experiencing symptoms or not. Test results will be compared to baseline scores. Additionally, the athletic trainer will notify the coach(s) and parents of the status of the athlete.

**ImPACT Post-Injury 2:** If further testing is needed, a second test will be administered once the student/athlete is symptom free. If a student/athlete fails Post-Injury test 1, and additional testing is needed, a minimum of 48 hours must lapse prior to re-testing. Athletic trainers have the discretion to prolong testing based on their evaluation. If symptoms persist and ImPACT scores do not improve within 7-10 days of initial injury, the athletic trainer will consider referring the student/athlete to a physician or other appropriate health care professional for further evaluation.

After the student/athlete has passed the ImPACT test, they may begin a graduated return-to-play protocol. Each of the steps listed below should occur 24 hours apart. An athlete may not progress to the next step if symptoms persist. If the athlete has symptoms during any of the above steps, then the process returns to the previous step with a minimum of 24 hours of rest before resuming the sequence.

**Step 1:** Light aerobic exercise to increase heart rate and blood pressure in the brain

**Step 2:** Perform moderate to heavy cardio and/or sport specific drills

**Step 3:** Progression to more complex training drills, no head impact activities

**Step 4:** Full participation in practice, including contact and intensity level applicable to the sport.  
If a practice proceeds a competition and does not include contact, the athletic trainer must simulate contact for evaluation purposes.

**Step 5:** IHSA post-concussion consent form signed by parent/guardian submitted

**Step 6:** Return to play with no restrictions

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## Return to Learn

The effects of a concussion on a student's return-to-learn experience are unique to each student. In most cases, a concussion will not significantly limit a student's participation in school; however, in some cases, a concussion can affect multiple aspects of a student's ability to participate, learn, and perform well in school. Students who are concussed may need varying levels of modifications and academic accommodations during their recovery. Current guidelines suggest that students should receive not only physical rest, but also cognitive rest. Cognitive rests refers to the reduction in mentally taxing activities, such as focused or prolonged reading, analytical problem-solving, computer use, playing video games, texting, etc.

When a student/athlete has been cleared by the athletic training staff to participate in athletic activity, the school nurse will notify the teachers of the student so they may return to their regular school activities, including Physical Education.

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## Special Considerations

**Repeat Concussions:** Recovery times are typically longer for student/athletes suffering from repeated concussions within a short time frame. Testing for return to play will be at the discretion of the athletic trainer. If symptoms do not improve, the athletic trainer may consider referring the student/athletic to a physician or other appropriate health care professional for further evaluations.

**Physical Education class:** A student suspected of suffering a concussion during Physical Education class must be sent to the nurse's office for evaluation. If a concussion is suspected, the nurse will notify the parents/guardians and teachers of the student. Parents are encouraged to seek medical attention. The student may not return to physical education class until they are symptom-free and cleared by the nurse's office. If the student is an in-season athlete, they will be referred to the athletic trainer.

**Out-of-season athletes:** Athletes who suffer a concussion while playing on an out-of-season team not affiliated with District 211 should seek medical attention. Additionally, parents are encouraged to notify the school nurse so they may inform teachers of the student's condition. District 211 athletic trainers may not approve an athlete for return-to-play for a team that is not affiliated with District 211.

**Extenuating circumstances:** Student/athletes known to have extenuating circumstances such as, IEP, 504 plans, or other psychosocial issues may experience a longer recovery window due to pre-existing conditions. These cases will be monitored on an individual basis by the athletic trainer, and other appropriate school personnel.

Head injuries are much different than injuries to other parts of the body, and therefore need to be treated in a different manner. Scientific studies show that brain injuries in children and adolescents take longer to heal than those same injuries do in adults.

## On-field or Sideline Evaluation

- The athlete will be evaluated onsite following the emergency action plan as stipulated by the National Athletic Trainers' Association.
- If no athletic trainer is available, the athlete will not return to practice or play. The coach will decide if 911 should be called. The parent(s) should be called and informed of their child's condition. If 911 is called, an athletic director should be contacted immediately.
- The player is not to be left alone following the injury. Monitoring of the athlete for deterioration is essential over the initial few hours following the injury.
- The appropriate disposition of the athlete must be determined by the athletic trainer and/or the team physician (if available).