



MHSA/MOA Concussion and Injury Procedure



Officials, coaches and administrators are being asked to make all efforts to ensure the safety of athletes who participate in MHSAA activities. In regard to players experiencing possible concussions or other serious injuries during MHSAA contests or practices, the following procedures will be immediately implemented:

Officials' Responsibilities:

- Officials are asked to use their best judgment in observing the signs, symptoms and behaviors of a concussion and other possible serious injuries. If there is a player that exhibits signs and symptoms of an injury (listed below from the NFHS Rule Book), officials will make coaches aware of the injured player and call an injury time out.
- The official should notify the coach by making the following statement:
 - *"Coach, you need to take a look at this player; he/she is exhibiting signs and symptoms of an injury."*
- Once the official notifies the coach, it is now the coach's responsibility.
- The official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional.
- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional (MD, DO, NP or PAC).

Remember, when in doubt, sit them out!

Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion (NFHS Rule Book)

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal brain function. An athlete does not have to lose consciousness (be "knocked out") to have suffered a concussion.

Common Symptoms of Concussion Include:

- Headache
- Fogginess
- Difficulty concentrating
- Easily confused
- Slowed thought processes
- Difficulty with memory
- Nausea
- Lack of energy, tiredness
- Dizziness, poor balance
- Blurred vision
- Sensitive to light and sounds
- Mood changes- irritable, anxious, or tearful

Coaches' Responsibilities:

- After the official has notified the coach of the injury and has sent the athlete off of the field/court, or if a coach witnesses an incident in practice, the coach must then make the initial determination of the injury. For instance, if the coach knows that a player is diabetic, and may be experiencing a diabetic episode, the coach should have the student treated appropriately and then return the player to play or practice.
- If the coach suspects the athlete is exhibiting the signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (listed below from the NFHS Rule Book), then the coach must have the player evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional. (MD, DO, NP or PAC)
- If an appropriate health-care professional on the sideline determines that the athlete HAS NOT suffered a concussion, the athlete may return to play.
- If an appropriate health-care professional is not available to evaluate the athlete, the athlete SHOULD NOT be allowed by the coach to return to play.
- In game situations, the official does not need written permission for an athlete to return to play nor does the official need to verify the credentials of the appropriate health-care professional.
- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition or practice rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional (MD, DO, NP or PAC).

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Suggested Concussion Management:

1. No athlete should return to play (RTP) or practice on the same day of a concussion.
2. Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health-care professional that day.
3. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.
4. After medical clearance, RTP should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for delayed RTP based upon return of any signs or symptoms.

For further details please see the "NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion" at www.nfhs.org.

Administrators' Responsibilities:

- Administrators must require all coaches to review and implement this procedure.
- Administrators should have regular reviews with their coaching staffs concerning these procedures.
- Administrators should require coaches to report all incidents to the administration immediately following the practice or contest. All incidents should be documented.
- Administrators must understand the responsibilities that coaches have in the decision to return athletes to play. MHSAA Rules and Regulations item (4) states: *A participant in any MHSAA sanctioned sport who exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion or balance problems) or other serious injury shall be immediately removed from the game, evaluated by the coaching staff in regard to the nature of the injury, and if it is determined to be a possible concussion or other serious injury, the player shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health-care professional (MD, DO, PAC or NP).*
- Ultimately, the decision to return an athlete to competition rests with the coach, after the affected player is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional (MD, DO, NP or PAC).

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