



## Concussion Management Plan for Athletes at ATI Contracted Schools

A concussion is defined as a traumatic brain injury (TBI) which results in a rapid or delayed onset of symptoms that can alter the way the brain normally functions. This can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or from a blow to the body with an impulsive force that is transmitted to the head. Even a seemingly minor “ding” can be serious and needs to be given appropriate treatment.

A concussion results in a wide range of clinical symptoms which can include headache, amnesia, confusion, disorientation, nausea, uncoordinated movements, and loss of consciousness. All injuries should be treated based on individual symptoms and not by following grading scales. The focus of rehabilitation should be complete cognitive rest, including time away from both athletics and academics.

Any athlete suspected of a concussion may not return to activity until cleared by a licensed healthcare provider who is authorized to provide sports physical examinations and trained in evaluation and management of concussions (requirements of a health care professional may vary by state). Return to play should follow a gradual, step-wise progression.

When any head injury occurs (whether at practice or a game) the following steps should be taken:

- Remove athlete from play.
- Call for athletic trainer to come to field (if not already there).
- Athletic trainer will complete sideline evaluation to rule out or confirm head injury/concussion
  - The immediate on-the-field assessment should focus on airway, breathing, and circulation as well as a focused neurologic assessment (mental status, neurological deficits, and cervical spine status). This assessment determines initial disposition (i.e. whether the athlete needs to be emergently transported to the hospital or further assessed on the sideline).
  - The sideline assessment allows for a more detailed history and exam. The history should focus on the mechanism of injury and somatic, affective, and cognitive signs/symptoms. The physical examination should focus extensively on the neurological exam, specifically assessing mental status and evaluating for neurologic deficits.
  - Memory function is best assessed by asking specific sport related questions and serial exams should take place every 5 minutes until the athlete returns to their baseline.
    - What venue are we at today?
    - Which half is it now?
    - Who did we play last?
    - What was the score?).
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- Any athlete suspected of head injury will not return to play that day.
- Athletic trainer will complete the ATI HIT (Head Injury Tool) Form in duplicate with one copy for the parent/guardian and one for the athlete’s injury report.
- A phone call will be made to the athlete’s parent/guardian to pick up the athlete and review proper immediate follow-up care. Parent or guardian must acknowledge in writing that they have received documentation as to the appropriate management of a concussion.
- If at any time the athlete exhibits a decrease in mental status or any of the following symptoms, seek immediate medical care either by having the athlete go to the closest emergency room or contacting 911.



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- Changes in alertness and consciousness
- Convulsions (seizures)
- Muscle weakness on one or both sides
- Persistent confusion
- Persistent unconsciousness
- Repeated vomiting
- Unequal pupils
- Unusual eye movements
- Walking problems
- The athletic trainer should contact appropriate school personnel (AD, school nurse, guidance counselor) to inform them of the athlete's concussion.
- No athlete should return to play until cleared by an appropriate licensed healthcare provider who is authorized to provide sports physical examinations and trained in evaluation and management of concussions. See below specific state requirements.
  - **Pennsylvania:** Authorized providers include licensed physician of medicine or osteopathic medicine (MD or DO)
  - **Delaware:** Authorized providers include licensed physician of medicine or osteopathic medicine (MD or DO)
  - **Maryland:** Authorized providers include licensed physician, physician assistant, neuropsychologist, or nurse practitioner who is aware of current medical guidelines on concussion evaluation and concussion evaluation and management falls within their own scope of practice.
- Once an athlete has been medically cleared by the licensed authorized provider AND is symptom-free, the athlete will begin a step-wise return to play as listed in the ATI Concussion Management Guidelines.