



Athletics & Driver Education

12465 Warwick Boulevard, Newport News, VA 23606-3041 • phone: 757-591-4601 • fax: 757-591-4683

Dear Newport News Athletic Parent/Guardian:

According to the Children's Hospital of the King's Daughter about one in ten local athletes in contact sports will sustain a concussion during a sports season. Many athletes, coaches, and parents do not know how serious the effects of a seemingly mild concussion can be. The lack of awareness may result in allowing an athlete to return to play too soon following an injury, placing him or her at risk of more serious injuries. At Newport News Public Schools, our biggest concern is the safety and wellness of these young school-age athletes.

Timely and accurate diagnosis is critical for reduced injury and long-term consequences to athletic, cognitive, and academic success. Most athletes will recover from a concussion completely and can return to play following an appropriate period of recovery. It is crucial to know when it is safe to return to play to avoid serious brain injury. The certified athletic trainer at each school will have the final authority to release your child back to activity.

Most often, return to play decisions are made without appropriate testing and a clinical evaluation and are based solely on the player's report of symptoms. Newport News Public Schools provides a baseline assessment with the Concussion Vitals Neurocognitive Assessment to all athletes. Any athlete who then sustains a concussion will then be re-tested for comparison to identify deficits resulting from the concussion.

Since your child has chosen to participate in our athletic program, it is important for you to be aware of our policy on concussion management. Attached, you will find the Newport News Concussion Policy and Return to Play Protocol along with a list of short and long term side effects of concussions. Once you have reviewed all the information, please sign and date the acknowledgment form and return it to the school's athletic trainer prior to the athlete's involvement in practice and competition.

Best Regards,

NNPS High School Athletic Trainers

Concussion Fact Sheet

Short Term Side Effects

- Headache
- Dazed and stunned
- Confused
- Balance problems (moves clumsily)
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Double or blurry vision
- Concentration or memory problems
- Behavior and personality changes
- Nausea or vomiting
- Loss of consciousness

Not all symptoms must be present for the athlete to have sustained a concussion

If any of these symptoms worsen following the injury, it is advised you seek further medical evaluation

Long Term Side Effects

- Chronic headaches
- Sleep difficulties
- Impaired sensation (touch, taste, smell, etc.)
- Language impairment (communication, expression, and understanding)
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Personality changes
- Aggression

Repeated concussions can lead to long-term memory loss, psychiatric disorders, and other neurologic problems. If you have had a number of concussions, your physician likely will advise you to avoid the activities that may put you at risk for future head injuries and to discontinue contact sports.

Concussion Management

JLCG-P - PROCEDURES: Concussion Management

These procedures address the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student athletes, the school division's activities to prevent concussions, the requirements for assessment of student athletes suspected of having concussions and follow-up assessments, and the school division's concussion management training activities. These procedures also include a return to learn protocol applicable to all students.

Definitions:

1. A concussion is a "traumatically induced transient disturbance of brain function caused by a complex physiological process". In other words: A brain injury that is characterized by an onset of impairment of cognitive and/or physical functioning, and is caused by a blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that causes a sudden jarring of the head (i.e., a helmet to the head, being knocked to the ground). A concussion can occur with or without a loss of consciousness.
2. Appropriate licensed health care provider means a physician, physician assistant, osteopath or athletic trainer licensed by the Virginia Board of Medicine; a neuropsychologist licensed by the Board of Psychology; or a nurse practitioner licensed by the Virginia State Board of Nursing, who has special training in the management of concussions.
3. *Return to play* means participate in a non-medically supervised practice or athletic competition.
4. *Return to learn* refers to instructional modifications that support a controlled, progressive increase in cognitive activities while the student recovers from a brain injury allowing the student to participate in classroom activities and learn without worsening symptoms and potentially delaying healing.
5. "At risk" athletes include students who have suffered a previous concussion and all students participating in the following sports: football, soccer, wrestling, and cheerleading.

Identification and Handling of Students Suspected of Having a Concussion; Follow-up:

A. Identification and Handling:

1. A student athlete suspected by that student athlete's coach, athletic trainer, or team physician of sustaining a concussion or brain injury in a practice or game shall be removed from the activity at that time.
2. Any student suspected by the student's teacher or other school building staff of sustaining a concussion, or any student for whom an appropriate license health care provider has provided information to the student's school that the student has sustained a concussion, will be assessed and treated according to guidelines issued by the school division's director of health services or like official. The return to learn protocol will apply to such students.

3. A student athlete who has been removed from play, evaluated, and suspected to have a concussion or brain injury shall not return to play that same day nor until (i) evaluated and cleared by an appropriately licensed health care provider as determined by the Board of Education and (ii) in receipt of written clearance to return to play from such licensed health care provider. The licensed health care provider evaluating student athletes suspected of having a concussion or brain injury may be a volunteer with appropriate licensure.

4. Appropriate licensed health care providers or properly trained individuals evaluating student athletes at the time of injury will utilize the Concussion Vital Signs Neurocognitive Assessment.

5. Protocol for *return to play*

A. No member of a school athletic team shall participate in any athletic event or practice the same day he or she is injured and:

- exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors attributable to a concussion; or
- has been diagnosed with a concussion.

B. No member of a school athletic team shall return to participate in an athletic event or training after he/she experiences a concussion unless all of the following conditions have been met:

- the student no longer exhibits signs, symptoms or behaviors consistent with a concussion, at rest or with exertion;
- the student is asymptomatic during, or following periods of supervised exercise that is gradually intensifying over a number of days; and
- the student receives a written medical release from an appropriate licensed health care provider.

C. If an athlete is evaluated by a community physician and the physician provides a return-to-play date, school division Certified Athletic Trainers will not allow an athlete to play or participate for the period specified; provided, however, that Certified Athletic Trainer has the discretion to hold an athlete longer than the physician-provided return-to-play date.

6. Protocol for *return to learn*

The school leadership shall be alert to cognitive and academic issues that may be experienced by a student athlete who has suffered a concussion or other head injury including: difficulty with concentration, organization, and long-term and short-term memory; sensitivity to bright lights and sounds; and, short-term problems with speech and language, reasoning, planning, and problem solving.

A student recovering from a brain injury may need total rest with a gradual return to school while others will be able to continue doing academic work with minimal instructional modifications. The school leadership, including the school nurse and the Certified Athletic Trainer, shall accommodate the gradual return to full participation in academic activities by a student athlete who has suffered a concussion or other head injury based on the recommendation of the student's licensed health care provider. The coordination of the student's return to the classroom will also address the student's participation in physical education activities, as appropriate.

Prevention:

A standardized concussion education program will be presented by the Certified Athletic Trainer as part of the Athletic Department's player/coach/parent meeting at all high schools each season for all sports.

1. A concussion fact sheet and a letter to all middle school and high school parents outlining the NNPS Concussion Policy will be distributed and require a signature prior to the athlete participating in practice or competition.
2. All "at-risk" athletes will be Concussion Vital Signs Neurocognitive Assessment baseline tested annually. All other athletes will be baseline tested upon request.
3. All coaches, including volunteers, are required to take the online concussion education program mandated by the VHSL prior to first day of practice.
4. Each school division athletic trainer will keep statistics regarding head injuries for the purpose of improving care and prevention. This will include the number of concussions per sport per season so that the percentage of athletes sustaining concussions may be calculated.
5. This policy and return to play guidelines will be available on the Newport News Public School web site in addition to each high school's website.
6. This information will also be shared with the coaches and Assistant Principals for all middle school sports prior to the beginning of practice for each season. It will be the responsibility of the Assistant Principals and coaches to communicate the information to the parents.
7. Helmet Replacement and Reconditioning policies and procedures.
 - a. Helmets must be National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) certified by the manufacturer
 - b. Reconditioned helmets must be NOCSAE recertified.

Assessment:

1. If an athlete suffers a concussion at practice or competition they will **NOT** be allowed to return to activity the day the injury was sustained.
2. If an athlete suffers a concussion at practice or competition the athlete will undergo a clinical evaluation utilizing the Concussion Vital Signs Neurocognitive Assessment by a Certified Athletic Trainer prior to returning to any physical activity.
3. The athlete must be evaluated by an appropriate Licensed Health Care Provider to determine the status of return to play.
4. If an athlete is evaluated by a community physician and the physician provides a return-to-play date, school division Certified Athletic Trainers will not allow an athlete to play or participate for the period specified; provided, however, that Certified Athletic Trainer has the discretion to hold an athlete longer than the physician-provided return-to-play date.
5. Once an athlete is asymptomatic and cleared by an appropriate Licensed Health Care Provider trained in current concussion management guidelines, they can begin the graduated return to play protocol.

Training and Policy and Procedures Review:

1. The Superintendent will appoint a concussion management policy team. This team will ensure that the concussion management policy and procedures remain appropriate and up-to-date. The concussion management policy team shall ensure training for coaches and health care professionals is current and consistent with best practice protocols.
2. The concussion management policy team will maintain a tracking system to ensure compliance with the annual training requirement.
3. Annual training on concussion management will be required for all coaches and volunteers through the National Federation of State High School Associations' (NFHS) online coach education program – *Concussion in Sports – What You Need to Know*.

Community Involvement

Non-interscholastic youth sports programs utilizing School Board property shall establish policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student athletes, consistent with the school division's procedures. The school division will provide its guidelines to organizations sponsoring athletic activities for students on School Board property as a part of the facility use agreement. In accordance with the state code, the school division shall not be required to enforce the organizations' compliance with such guidelines.

Reviewed: June 21, 2011, March 19, 2013

Revised July 2016