

Norton Sports Health

Sports Concussion Reference Guide and Action Plan

A. Concussion Suspected:

Any athlete who exhibits signs or symptoms of a concussion should be removed from play immediately, assessed, and should not be allowed to return to activity that day. Sideline evaluations should be performed by a physician, athletic trainer, ARNP, or PA-C. If one of the above-listed medical professionals is not available for a sideline assessment, coaches should withhold the athlete from further competition until a physician assessment can be arranged.

B. Post-injury Management

The athlete should be sent home with a responsible adult (preferably a parent or guardian) who is capable of monitoring the athlete and understanding the following home care instructions (see below). If there is any question about the status of the athlete, or if the athlete is not able to be monitored appropriately, the athlete should be referred to the emergency department for evaluation.

C. Home Care Instructions

In some instances, the signs/symptoms of a concussion may worsen several hours or even days after the injury. Parents should be especially observant for the following:

- Worsening headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Difference in pupil size from R to L
- Mental confusion or behavioral changes
- Worsening gait or balance problems
- Blurry or double vision
- Slurred speech
- Noticeable changes in level of consciousness
- Seizure activity
- Decreased or irregular pulse or respiration

The best guideline is to note symptoms that worsen, and behaviors that seem to represent a change in the athlete. If there are questions or concerns about the symptoms observed, contact a physician for instructions, or seek medical attention at the closest emergency department. Otherwise, the instructions below may be followed:

IT IS OK TO:

Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) for headaches
Use an ice pack on the head/neck
Eat a light diet
Go to sleep
Rest (no strenuous activity)

THERE IS NO NEED TO:

Check eyes repeatedly with a flashlight
Wake up every hour
Test reflexes
Stay in bed

DO NOT:

Exercise
Take ibuprofen, aspirin, or other anti-inflammatory medications for the first 72 hours