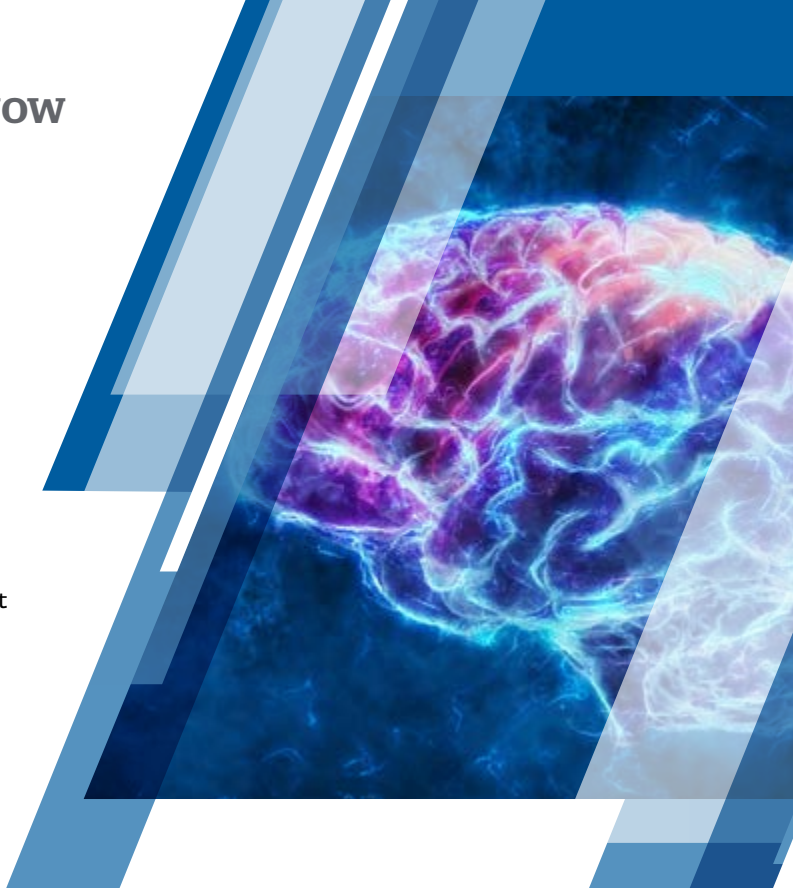
WHAT STUDENT-ATHLETES NEED TO KNOW

Concussion Safety



What Is a Concussion?

The Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport, which resulted from the sixth international conference, defines sport-related concussion as follows:

Sport-related concussion is a traumatic brain injury caused by a direct blow to the head, neck or body resulting in an impulsive force being transmitted to the brain that occurs in sports and exercise-related activities. This initiates a neurotransmitter and metabolic cascade, with possible axonal injury, blood flow change and inflammation affecting the brain. Symptoms and signs may present immediately, or evolve over minutes or hours, and commonly resolve within days, but may be prolonged.

Additional information on concussion diagnosis, management and prevention in collegiate athletes, including a complete definition of concussion, can be found **here**.

How Can I Keep Myself Safe?

1. Know the symptoms.

You may experience ...

- Headache or head pressure.
- Nausea.
- Balance problems or dizziness.
- Double or blurry vision.
- Sensitivity to light or noise.
- Feeling sluggish, hazy or foggy.
- Confusion, concentration or memory problems.

2. Speak up.

- If you think you have a concussion, stop playing and talk to your coach, athletic trainer or team physician immediately.

3. Take time to recover.

- Follow your team physician and athletic trainer's directions during concussion recovery.
- When managed properly, most student-athletes recover fully from concussion. Exercise, under medical supervision, is a core component of concussion management.
- There may be negative consequences when concussion is left untreated.
- Once you've recovered from a concussion, talk with your physician about the risks and benefits of continuing to participate in your sport.

How Can I Be a Good Teammate?

1. Know the signs.

You may notice that a teammate ...

- Appears dazed or stunned.
- Forgets an instruction.
- Is confused about an assignment or position.
- Is unsure of the game, score or opponent.
- Appears less coordinated, unsteady on feet or wobbly.
- Answers questions slowly.
- Loses consciousness.

2. Encourage teammates to be safe.

- If you think one of your teammates has a concussion, tell your coach, athletic trainer or team physician immediately.
- Help create a culture of safety by encouraging your teammates to report any concussion symptoms.

3. Support your injured teammates.

- If one of your teammates has a concussion, let them know you and the team support playing it safe and following medical advice during recovery.
- Being unable to practice or join team activities can be isolating. Make sure your teammates know they're not alone.

No two concussions are the same. Symptoms may appear several hours after the initial impact or even the next day. Symptoms may also evolve over several days. If you are unsure if you have a concussion, talk to your athletic trainer or team physician immediately.

What Happens If I Get a Concussion and Keep Practicing or Competing?

- Due to brain vulnerability after a concussion, an athlete may be more likely to suffer another concussion while symptomatic from the first one.
- In rare cases, repeat head trauma can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage or even death.
- Continuing to play after a concussion increases the chance of sustaining other injuries too, not just concussion.
- Athletes with concussion have reduced concentration and slowed reaction time. This means that you won't be performing at your best.
- Athletes who delay reporting concussion take longer to recover fully.

What is the Recovery Time for a Concussion?

- Each athlete is different, but emerging information indicates that most athletes fully recover from concussion.
- Some athletes experience persisting post-concussive symptoms, which are managed with exercise and targeted treatment.
- If your symptoms persist, you may also have another treatable condition unrelated to your concussion. If you are experiencing any ongoing symptoms, please seek medical care with the team physician.

What Do I Need to Know About Repeated Head Impacts?

- Research into the new concept of repeated head impacts is evolving rapidly.
- Most head impacts in sport occur at low levels well below the force needed to cause a sports-related concussion.
- The medical and scientific community continues to conduct research to determine if long-term exposure to head impacts may be deleterious to brain health.
- While many questions remain unanswered, the NCAA Concussion Checklist recommends that efforts should be made to reduce head impact exposure in both practice and game settings.

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy ("CTE")

- In recent years, there has been ongoing research into CTE, and more research is needed to answer important questions.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control website, research-to-date suggests that CTE is associated with long-term exposure to repeated head impacts at levels that would cause injury to the brain.
- According to the CDC, there is no strong scientific evidence that shows that getting one or more concussions (or other mild traumatic brain injuries) or occasional hits to the head leads to CTE.

More research is needed to better understand:

- The causes of CTE, including the role of repeated head impacts.
- Other potential risk factors for CTE, including the role of a person's sex, genetics, medical history, and environmental and lifestyle factors.
- How the CTE pathology develops, and what symptoms CTE pathology may cause.
- Why some people develop CTE and others do not.

You can find more information on the emerging CTE research at various sources including the **CDC**, **NINDS** and the **Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport**.

If you are concerned or have questions, please talk to your medical doctor.

Did You Know?

- NCAA rules require that team physicians and athletic trainers manage your concussion and injury recovery independent of coaching staff, or other non-medical, influence.
- We're learning more about concussion every day. To find out more about the largest concussion study ever conducted, which is being led by the NCAA and U.S. Department of Defense, visit **ncaa.org/concussion**.

CONCUSSION TIMELINE

Baseline Testing

Balance, cognitive and neurological tests that help medical staff manage and diagnose a concussion.

Concussion

If you show signs of a concussion, NCAA rules require that you be removed from play and medically evaluated.

Recovery

Your school has a concussion management plan, and team physicians and athletic trainers are required to follow that plan during your recovery.

Return-to-Learn

Return-to-learn should be done in a step-by-step progression in which adjustments are made as needed to manage your symptoms.

Return-to-Sport

Final return-to-sport only happens after you have returned to your pre-concussion baseline and you've gone through a step-by-step progression of increasing activity.