

# Sports Injury Guidelines: Head Injury

Washington County Schools Athletic Training

Beth A. Funkhouser, MEd, ATC

276.698.7530

bethf@wcs.k12.va.us

Brad Bussey, ATC

276.356.3642

bbussey@wcs.k12.va.us

## Head Injury Information

Any blow to the head, face or jaw has the potential to be dangerous, if not treated properly. Take this information home and follow these important guidelines.

### If any of the following occur, seek medical attention immediately:

- Moderate, severe, prolonged or increasing headache
- Dizziness, “foggy” feeling, or poor balance
- Pupils of unequal size
- Hypersensitivity to noise and/or light
- Nausea or vomiting
- Ringing in the ears or difficulty hearing
- Blurred or double vision
- Mental confusion and/or memory loss
- Behavioral changes, abnormal mood swings
- Abnormal drowsiness or inability to awaken athlete
- Clear fluid or bleeding coming from ears or nose
- Moderate or severe neck and/or back pain
- Tingling, numbness or lack of control of arms or legs

### Observe athlete closely

- If symptoms don't appear to require emergency treatment, monitor the athlete closely by checking his/her mental status, attention, balance, speech and memory recall every 10 minutes until stable. If these processes worsen or do not improve in a few hours, seek emergency care.
- Use no medications unless instructed by a physician, as this can encourage bleeding in the brain or mask symptoms.
- Overnight, awaken the athlete every 1-2 hours to check for the above symptoms and general mental clarity and orientation.
- Allow only clear fluids and a light diet, avoid excessive eating and drinking until asymptomatic.

## Second Impact Syndrome

### What is it?

Second Impact Syndrome is a dangerous condition which can occur if an athlete returns to sports before full recovery. If you receive a second blow to your head (even a relatively minor one) before the symptoms of the initial concussion have cleared, the consequences can be deadly.

A second blow to the head causes the brain to lose its ability to regulate blood flow properly. Engorgement of the blood vessels occurs, which places excessive pressure on the brain. This pressure can result in rapid respiratory failure, coma and even death.

### Prevention

Don't return to sports after a concussion until your signs and symptoms have completely cleared and you have completed your Concussion Rehabilitation Program. (See Return to Play Protocol on next page)

Always check with your ATC and/or your doctor, before returning to activity.

**Call us or your physician, if you have any questions or concerns!**

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## Standard Return to Play Criteria

**No athlete suspected of having a concussion  
may return to play in the same day**

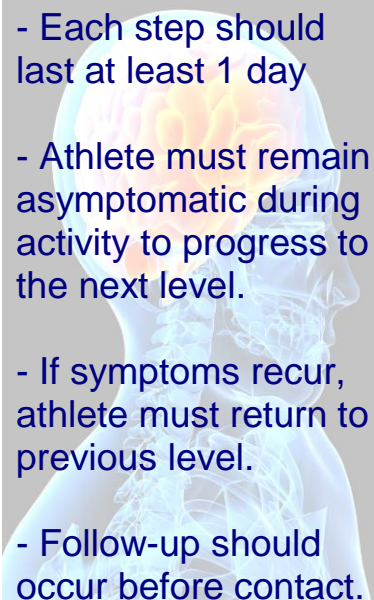
Physical & Cognitive symptoms lasting < 15 minutes = **1 Week Asymptomatic Minimum**

Physical & Cognitive symptoms lasting > 15 minutes = **2 Weeks Asymptomatic Minimum**

Any Loss of Consciousness or deteriorating condition = **Transport to ER &  
Physician clearance required**

## Medical Clearance Return To Play Protocol

- No exertional activity until asymptomatic for at least 24 hours. This includes participation in PE. For some, it may be 2 weeks before he/she is asymptomatic at rest.
- **Step 1:** When the athlete has no symptoms at rest after a full day of school, begin low-impact activities such as walking, stationary bike, or light jogging for 10 minutes.
- **Step 2:** Initiate aerobic activity fundamental to specific sport such as running or strength training.
- **Step 3:** Begin non-contact drills specific to sport such as dribbling, hitting, fielding, batting, etc.
- **Step 4:** Full contact in practice setting.
- **Step 5:** If athlete remains asymptomatic, he/she may return to play with ATC and/or Physician approval.

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- Each step should last at least 1 day
  - Athlete must remain asymptomatic during activity to progress to the next level.
  - If symptoms recur, athlete must return to previous level.
  - Follow-up should occur before contact.

### References:

NFHS Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports; NFHS SMAC, 2009  
Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport; Br J Sports Med, 2009

For More Information visit: [www.quia.com/wcsathletictraining.html](http://www.quia.com/wcsathletictraining.html)