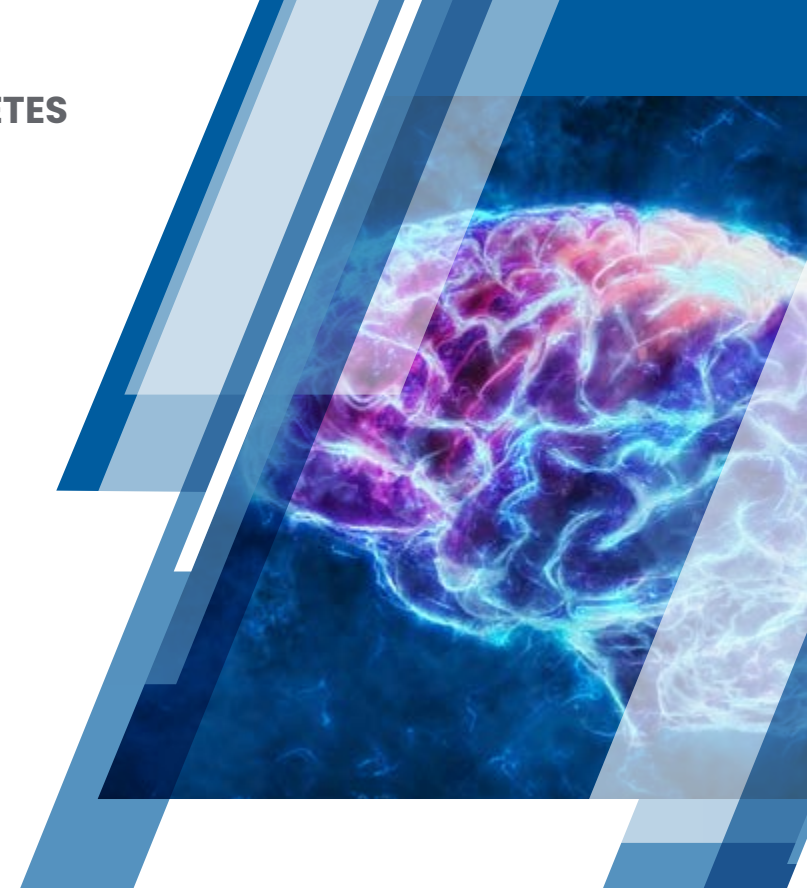
KEY INFORMATION FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

Concussion Safety Guide



Understanding Concussion

The Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport, developed after the sixth international conference, describes sport-related concussion as follows:

Sport-related concussion is a traumatic brain injury during sport or exercise when a direct blow to the head, neck or body sends an impulsive force to the brain. This triggers a cascade of neurotransmitter and metabolic changes, with possible axonal injury, altered blood flow and brain inflammation. Signs and symptoms may arise immediately or develop over minutes or hours. They often resolve within days but can last longer.

More on concussion diagnosis, management and prevention in college athletes, including the full definition, is available **here.**

How Can I Protect Myself?

1. Recognize the symptoms.

Possible symptoms include:

- Head pain or pressure.
- Feeling nauseated.
- Dizziness or difficulty balancing.
- Blurred or double vision.
- Sensitivity to noise or light.
- Feeling slow, hazy or foggy.
- Confusion or trouble focusing or remembering.

2. Tell someone.

- If you suspect a concussion, stop playing. Tell your coach, athletic trainer or team physician immediately.

3. Allow time to recover.

- During recovery, follow the advice of your team physician and athletic trainer.
- With proper management, most student-athletes recover fully. Exercise under medical supervision is a central part of concussion care.
- An untreated concussion may have harmful consequences.
- After recovery, discuss with your physician the risks and benefits of continuing to play your sport.

How Can I Support Teammates?

1. Recognize the signs.

A teammate may show signs such as:

- Looking dazed or stunned.
- Forgetting an instruction.
- Being unclear about an assignment or position.
- Being unsure of the game, score or opponent.
- Seeming less coordinated, wobbly or unsteady.
- Responding slowly to questions.
- Becoming unconscious.

2. Promote teammate safety.

- Tell your coach, athletic trainer or team physician at once if you think a teammate has a concussion.
- Build a safety-minded team by encouraging teammates to report any concussion symptoms.

3. Help injured teammates.

- If a teammate has a concussion, show that you and the team support safe choices and following medical advice during recovery.
- Missing practices and team activities can feel isolating. Remind injured teammates they are not alone.

Every concussion is different. Symptoms may arise hours after the impact or the next day, and may change over several days. If you are unsure whether you have a concussion, speak to your athletic trainer or team physician immediately.

What If I Keep Practicing or Competing After a Concussion?

- While symptoms remain, your brain is vulnerable and you may be more likely to sustain another concussion.
- Rarely, repeated head trauma can cause brain swelling, lasting brain damage or death.
- Playing on after a concussion raises the risk of other injuries as well as another concussion.
- Concussion reduces concentration and slows reactions, so you will not perform at your best.
- Delaying a concussion report lengthens the time needed for full recovery.

How Long Does Recovery Take?

- Recovery differs for each athlete, but emerging evidence suggests that most athletes recover fully.
- Some athletes have lasting post-concussive symptoms that are managed with exercise and targeted treatment.
- Persistent symptoms may also reflect another treatable condition unrelated to your concussion. See your team physician for any ongoing symptoms.

What Should I Know About Repeated Head Impacts?

- Knowledge about the emerging concept of repeated head impacts is developing quickly.
- Most head impacts in sport involve far less force than is needed to cause a sport-related concussion.
- Medical and scientific researchers continue to study whether long-term exposure to head impacts can harm brain health.
- Many questions remain, but the NCAA Concussion Checklist advises reducing exposure to head impacts during both practices and games.

Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE)

- Research on CTE has continued in recent years, but further studies are needed to answer key questions.
- The Centers for Disease Control website states that research so far suggests CTE is linked to long-term exposure to repeated head impacts strong enough to injure the brain.
- The CDC reports no strong scientific evidence that one or more concussions, other mild traumatic brain injuries, or occasional head impacts lead to CTE.

Further research is needed to clarify:

- What causes CTE, including how repeated head impacts contribute.
- Other possible CTE risk factors, including sex, genetics, medical history, environment and lifestyle.
- How CTE pathology develops and which symptoms it may cause.
- Why CTE develops in some people but not others.

Find further information on emerging CTE research from sources such as the **CDC, NINDS** and the **Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport.**

Discuss any concerns or questions with your medical doctor.

Key Facts

- NCAA rules require team physicians and athletic trainers to manage your concussion and injury recovery without influence from coaches or other non-medical staff.
- Concussion knowledge grows daily. Learn about the largest concussion study ever conducted, led by the NCAA and U.S. Department of Defense, at **ncaa.org/concussion.**

THE CONCUSSION TIMELINE



Baseline Tests

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

Concussion

NCAA rules require removal from play and medical assessment if you show signs of concussion.

Recovery

Team physicians and athletic trainers must follow your school's concussion management plan throughout your recovery.

Return-to-Learn

Resume learning step by step, with adjustments as needed to manage your symptoms.

Return-to-Sport

Full return to sport follows recovery to your pre-concussion baseline and a stepwise progression through increasing activity.

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