

Loudoun County Public Schools

Division of Athletics



Concussions in High School Sports—LCPS Guidelines for Parents, Athletes, & Staff

IMPORTANT INFORMATION—READ CAREFULLY

Loudoun County Public Schools—Student Athlete Concussion Guidelines:

Effective July 1, 2011, the Code of Virginia was amended to include Section 22.1-271.5 directing Virginia school divisions to **develop and distribute guidelines for policies dealing with concussions in student-athletes**, and requiring Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) to **obtain written acknowledgment from students and parents** of information regarding **the identification and LCPS handling of suspected concussions** in student athletes.

1. Concussion Facts:

- A concussion is a **brain injury** caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the **head, face, neck, or body** which results in a temporary disruption of normal brain function. A concussion occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull. **An athlete does not have to lose consciousness to suffer a concussion.**
- Concussions occur most frequently in football, but girl's lacrosse, girl's soccer, boy's lacrosse, wrestling and girl's basketball follow closely behind. **All athletes are at risk.**
- Concussion symptoms may last from a few days to **several months**.
- A concussion can affect a student's **ability to do schoolwork and other activities**.
- An athlete **may not return to sports while still having symptoms** from a concussion as they are at risk for prolonged symptoms and further injury.
- A concussion may cause multiple symptoms. Many symptoms appear immediately after the injury, while others **may develop over the next several days or weeks**.
- Most athletes who experience a concussion can recover completely as long as they do not return to play prematurely. The effects of repeated concussions can be cumulative, and after a concussion, there is a period in which the brain is particularly vulnerable to further injury. If an athlete sustains a second concussion during this period, the **risk of permanent brain injury increases significantly** and the consequences of a seemingly mild second concussion can be **very severe, and even result in death** (i.e. “Second Impact Syndrome”).

2. Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing (ImPACT)

In an effort to provide for the safety of our student athletes, LCPS has implemented the **Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing (ImPACT)** program as a tool to assist in the evaluation of concussions.

ImPACT is widely used and the most scientifically validated computerized concussion evaluation tool. Given the inherent difficulties in concussion management, it is important to manage concussions on an individualized basis and to perform baseline testing and/or post injury testing. This type of concussion assessment can help to objectively evaluate the concussed athlete's post-injury condition and track recovery for safe return to play, thus preventing the cumulative effects of concussion.

A “**Baseline**” ImPACT evaluation is conducted by the **LCPS Athletic Trainer** with assistance from the Athletic Director and Coaches trained to administer baseline testing.

3. Concussion Signs Observed by Parents, Coaches, and Students:

- Athlete appears dazed or stunned • Is confused about what to do • Forgets plays • Is unsure of game, score or opponent • Moves clumsily • Loses consciousness • Shows behavior or personality changes • Can't recall events prior to hit • Can't recall events after hit

4. Concussion Signs and Symptoms:

- Athlete feels Headache or “pressure” in head • Nausea or vomiting • Balance problems or dizziness • Double or fuzzy vision • Bothered by light or noise • Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy • Concentration or memory problems • Confusion

5. Actions if a Student Athlete Suffers a Suspected Concussion Event:

- Student Athlete **shall be immediately removed from play**, be it a game or practice, and **may not return to play or practice on that same day**. Continuing to participate in physical activity after a concussion can lead to worsening concussion symptoms, increased risk for further injury, and even a risk of death. **WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT.**
- Student Athlete **must be evaluated by an Approved Healthcare Professional and be cleared** before returning to play or practice. The healthcare professional's written diagnosis indicating the athlete's status shall be provided to the Athletic Trainer for further clearance. **Approved Healthcare Professionals** include **MD-Medical Doctor, DO-Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, PA-Physician Assistant, CNP-Certified Nurse Practitioner, ATC-Certified Athletic Trainer, and/or Neuropsychologist.**
- Approximately 48 hours after a suspected concussion, the Student Athlete will be ImPACT evaluated again. Once an athlete is asymptomatic, they may **begin a progression of activities** in a **step-wise fashion** to allow the brain to re-adjust to exertion. **REST IS THE BEST TREATMENT FOR CONCUSSION.**

6. “Steps” the Student Athlete Must Follow After Clearance by a Medical Professional:

If symptoms occur during any of the following **Steps**, the **athlete must cease activity and be re-evaluated and cleared once again** by their healthcare provider.

- **Step 1** No physical activity until asymptomatic. Athlete must remain asymptomatic in order to progress to the next Step. If symptoms return during any of the Steps, the student athlete must return to the previous Step.
- **Step 2** Light exercise, including walking or riding an exercise bike. No weight lifting.
- **Step 3** Running in the gym or on the field. No helmet or other equipment.
- **Step 4** Non-contact training drills in full equipment. Weight training can begin.
If after Step 4, there are no symptoms of concussion, the athlete will be given a cognitive test before going on to **Step 5**. If the athlete does not clear on the second ImPACT evaluation, they will repeat the Steps above and have another ImPACT evaluation after **Step 4**.
- **Step 5** Full Contact practice or training.
- **Step 6** Game-play with release from **Approved Healthcare Professional (MD- Medical Doctor, DO- Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, PA- Physician Assistant, CNP- Certified Nurse Practitioner, ATC- Certified Athletic Trainer, or Neuropsychologist).**

7. What Must be Done by Student Athletes, Parents, and LCPS Staff?

- All parties must learn to **recognize the Signs and Symptoms** of concussion.
- Teach student athletes to **immediately inform the Athletic Trainer and Coach** if they experience such symptoms.
- Teach student athletes to **tell the Athletic Trainer and Coach if they suspect that a teammate has a concussion.**
- **Ask Teachers to monitor** any decrease in **grades or changes in behavior** that could indicate a concussion.
- **Report concussions to the Athletic Trainer and Coaches** to help with monitoring injured student athletes as they move to the next sports season.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION—PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

Indicate your agreement by signing below and return the signed form to your student's school. Keep a copy for your records.

I have received and read the **Loudoun County Public Schools Student Athlete--Concussion Guidelines** and grant my consent and permission for the Student Athlete to participate in the **Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing** (ImPACT) program including Baseline and Post-Concussion Cognitive Testing. Furthermore, I acknowledge, understand, and certify by my signature below that I agree to the protocols of the LCPS concussion program for the Student Athlete's best welfare and safe participation in sports for Loudoun County Public Schools.

Student Athlete (Type or Print)

Student Athlete Signature	Date
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Parent/Guardian (Type or Print)

Parent/Guardian Signature	Date
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