

Arlington Catholic Concussion Protocol

Concussions sometimes occur among athletes in competitive sports programs. At Arlington Catholic careful protocols are utilized to guide management of head injuries. The following will provide background information on concussions and describe protocols followed at Arlington Catholic High School.

Please Note: If a student athlete is suffering from any signs and / or symptoms of concussion resulting from a blow to the head, the athlete *MUST* report to the Athletic Trainer or Coach upon injury if occurred during play. Upon return to school the student *MUST* report to the School Nurse. The sooner a proper diagnosis can be made, the sooner healing can begin.

Definition of a Concussion:

A concussion is the disruption of normal brain function due to either a direct blow to the head, face and neck or an indirect blow or jolt to another part of the body that transmits an “impulsive” force to the brain. Some concussions may result in a loss of consciousness.

It is imperative that the brain have enough time to heal in order to prevent any further trauma or permanent damage. **Rest** must always come in the form of **ceasing all physical activity**, but may also involve a break from challenging cognitive activity as well.

Information in this definition was obtained from the Concussion Sports Group and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Signs (observable behaviors) that may be present with concussion:

- Appears to be dazed or stunned
- Is confused about time, date location
- Is unable to remember what he/she did prior to or after the injury
- Has altered balance
- Is slow to answer questions
- Displays a personality change
- Has altered sleep patterns: is unable to fall asleep or feels like he/she always wants to sleep
- Is vomiting
- Experiences loss of consciousness(not present in all concussions)

Symptoms (experienced and reported by athletes) that may be present with concussions:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Dizziness
- Double or fuzzy vision or any other visual alteration
- Sensitivity to light and / or noise

- Feeling sluggish or slow
- Feeling “foggy” or in a “funk”

Difficulty in concentrating when reading, listening or speaking

Management of a Concussion:

Proper management of concussion is the best form of prevention of serious injury. Most important is prevention of Second Impact Syndrome- a catastrophic increase in intracranial pressure leading to massive brain swelling, herniation and death. This syndrome occurs in athletes up to 14 days post-concussion and when an athlete returns to competition prior to the complete resolution of symptoms. Therefore the following **concussion protocols** are utilized at **Arlington Catholic High School**:

- 1) Any student/athlete diagnosed with concussion is removed from competition.
- 2) No students with concussion are allowed to return to play in the current game.
- 3) All concussions and suspected concussions must have medical evaluation by licensed physician or Nurse Practitioner following the injury before returning to school.
- 4) Athlete must see School nurse daily until symptom free for 3 days. *If symptoms last 7 days or more must be symptom free for 7 days.*
- 5) Athlete must be symptom free for a specific time (see above) before return to play protocol can begin with trainer.
- 6) Return to Play Protocol:
 - a. Retest Baseline Impact Cognitive Test
 - b. Light Aerobic exercise is supervised by the athletic trainer
 - c. Non- contact drills until 1 week post-injury
 - d. Return to contact sports after minimum of 1 week post-injury and completely asymptomatic
 - e. Any recurrence of concussive symptoms will lead to the athlete dropping back to the previous level.
- 7) **An athlete with a history of 3 or more concussions is highly recommended to avoid contact sports. Participation will require neurocognitive testing as well as evaluation and clearance by a Neurologist or Concussion Specialist.**

Effects of concussion are cumulative in athletes who return to play prior to complete recovery. Post concussion syndrome can involve decreased processing speed, short term memory impairment, concentration deficit, depression/irritability, fatigue/sleep disturbance and academic difficulties.

More information on concussions can be obtained from the following website:

www.sportsconcussion.com

Concussion Protocol

Steps for Return to Play

Once you are symptom free for 3* days you may progress the following day to the next step.

Day 1 is the day following the symptom free period!

Day 1) Retest Baseline Impact Cognitive Test

Day 2) Light aerobic exercise such as walking or stationary cycling. No resistance training

Day 3) Sport specific exercise- for example, skating and puck handling in hockey, running and ball skills in soccer (NO HEADING), football quarterbacks may resume sideline throwing. An important portion of this step is the addition of one set of low resistance or simple resistance training.

Day 4) Resume non-contact training drills: for example, walk through pass blocking for football lineman. Add additional sets and higher intensity resistance training

Day 5) **Full contact practice after receiving medical clearance from MD.**

Day6) GAME PLAY

If any post concussion symptoms develop at any stage you then drop back to the previous level and try to progress again after 24 hours. No medications may be taken at any step of the progression. This is to prevent masking a more serious underlying condition! You must check with your athletic trainer everyday PRIOR to practice once symptom free for 3* days!