

A message from the Rhinelander High School Athletic Training Services

Concussion information for Parents, Student Athletes, Coaches , Teachers and staff;

A concussion is a form of mild brain injury, and results in a change in the metabolic functions of the brain. For most athletes, normal brain function will return to baseline over the course of 7 to 10 days. For some, however, this recovery can be protracted, lasting as long as 4 to 6 weeks.

The challenge with treating an athlete suffering from a mild brain injury stems, in part, from the fact that often there are no objective clinical findings. It is during this recovery phase that teachers, parents, or friends may observe changes with the athlete. Some of these commonly seen altered behaviors include:

- Headaches
- Sensitivity to light/sound
- Fatigue
- Reduced attention
- Increased irritability
- Slow mental processing speed
- Memory problems

Academic Considerations

We are requesting that during this recovery phase, parents and teachers are made aware of the injury and observe the athlete for the above signs and symptoms. It is also expected that school staff will observe the athletes academic performance and make accommodations as necessary during the recovery phase. Such accommodations may include:

- Allow the student to wear a hat or sunglasses when in the classroom since florescent lighting tends to "aggravate" post-concussion headaches
- Allow additional time when giving assignments or tests
- Expect and accept absences, especially during the early portion of the recovery; "rest" allows for a quicker recovery of normal metabolism.
- Teachers should talk privately with and reassure the student athlete. Student stress levels can be minimized through open communication and assistance with accommodations for school work.
- The school may need to allow/encourage "rest periods"- in a quiet area.
- We encourage teachers to communicate with the school nurse (email) and/or the family once a week as the student progresses.

Return to Play Considerations

Athletes with mild traumatic brain injury, typically recover rapidly—once the ‘fogginess’ and slower mental processing improve. Students may literally wake up one morning and say, "Wow, I'm back to normal!"

No athlete should “RETURN TO PLAY” until they are symptom free, both at rest and with exercise. This decision will be guided through collaboration with the Rhinelander School district’s Athletic Training Services, the athlete’s physician, the parents, and the coaches. Return to play decision-making is guided, in part, by the recommendations from the second International Conference on Concussion in Sports, Prague 2004. The following is provided as a general guide for the return to play decision-making and will be followed by ATS personnel:

- Athletes must be symptom free at rest (including observed signs from teachers/parents)
- Once symptom free, the athletic trainer will guide return to play with the following guidelines:
 - Day 1: Walking for 20-30 minutes at a rate of 2-1/2 miles per hour
 - Day 2: Jogging for 20-30 minutes
 - Day 3: Running for 20-30 minutes
 - Day 4: Performing sports specific practice drills
 - Day 5: Return to play with ATS approval.
- If headaches or other symptoms occur, during any step, the activity needs to be stopped. The athlete should then wait 24 hours and start at the previous level again.

Post-Concussion Syndrome

These recommendations, including our zero tolerance for return to play with any symptoms, are in place to minimize the risk of post-concussion syndrome. Although the athlete's symptoms are currently minor, athletes who return to play with symptoms are at increased risk for post-concussion syndrome. This syndrome results from an additional minor head injury, during the recovery phase, which leads to severe, permanent brain injury and even death. A key component to its prevention is open and honest communication of the athlete's symptoms to coaches, and athletic training service personnel. Further information on this subject may be obtained at the following web sites:

- The Second International Conference on Concussion in Sport-Prague 2004.
<http://www.athletictherapy.org/docs/PragueConcussionArticle.pdf>
- Concussion (Mild Traumatic Brain Injury) and the Team Physician: A Consensus Statement*
<http://www.acsm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Clinicians1&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=4362>
- American Association of Pediatrics position on mild closed head injury:
<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/pediatrics;104/6/1407.pdf>
- Impact test web site:
www.impacttest.com

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