

HEADS UP: Concussions in Sports...

A Fact Sheet for Parents & Students

On April 14th, 2012, Governor Heineman signed into law LB260, the Nebraska Concussion Awareness Act with the bill taking effect **July 1, 2012**. The bill affects any schools having athletes 19 years old or younger, as well as any sports organization, including youth leagues, club sports, or any organization sponsoring a sporting activity where there is a cost to participants or where such costs are sponsored. There are three primary components of the act:

1. Education – (a) concussion educational training must be made available to all coaches on how to recognize symptoms of a concussion, and how to seek proper medical treatment. (b) Athletes and parents must be provided concussion information prior to an athlete's participation on an annual basis that includes (i) signs & symptoms of a concussion, (ii) risks posed by sustaining a concussion, and (iii) actions athletes should take in response to sustaining a concussion – including informing their coaches
2. Removal of Athlete – an athlete presenting signs or symptoms of a concussion, thereby being “reasonably suspected” of having sustained a concussion, (a) must be removed from participation, and (b) may not return to participation until evaluated by appropriate licensed health care professional, and
3. Written & Signed Clearance for Return to Play (RTP) – an athlete having been removed from participation for the purpose of presenting with signs or symptoms or “reasonably suspected” of having sustained a concussion must have, before RTP or participation is allowed by a coach, (a) written and signed clearance from an appropriate licensed health care professional, and (b) written and signed clearance from the athlete's parents.

A Licensed Health Care Professional means a physician or licensed practitioner under the direct supervision of a physician, e.g. PA-C or APRN; a neuropsychologist, an athletic trainer, or a qualified individual able to (a) provide health care services where doing so falls within one's scope of practice in Nebraska, and (b) is trained in the evaluation and management of traumatic brain injury among a pediatric population.

For further details please visit www.nebsportsconcussion.org

What is a concussion? A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious and could be a concussion.

What parents/guardians should do if they think their child has a concussion?

1. OBEY the NEW LAW.
 - a. Keep your child out of participation until s/he is cleared to return by a licensed healthcare provider.
 - b. Seek medical attention right away.
2. Teach your child that it's not smart to play with a concussion.
3. Tell all of your child's coaches and the student's school nurse about ANY concussion.

What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

You cannot see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days after the injury. If your teen reports one or more symptoms of concussion listed below, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, keep your teen out of play and seek medical attention right away.

STUDENTS—If you think you have a concussion:

- **Tell your coaches & parents.** Never ignore a bump or blow to the head, even if you feel fine. Also, tell your coach if you think one of your teammates might have a concussion.
- **Get a medical check-up.** A physician or other licensed healthcare provider can tell you if you have a concussion, and when it is OK to return to play.
- **Give yourself time to heal.** If you have a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. It is important to rest and not return to play until you get the OK from your healthcare professional.

Signs Reported by Students:

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not “feeling right” or is “feeling down”

PARENTS—

How can you help your child prevent a concussion?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your children can take to protect themselves from concussion and other injuries.

- Make sure they wear the right protective equipment for their activity. It should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
- Ensure that they follow their coaches' rules for safety and the rules of the sport.
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times.

Signs Observed by Parents or Guardians:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to hit or fall
- Can't recall events after hit or fall