

Concussions: A Guideline for Coaches

Recently, concussion management and return to play legislation had been enacted in our region. The directives of the legislation are also consistent with the emerging accepted standard of care for concussion in youth sports. To date, more than half the states in the US including SD, ND, MN, NE, & IA have enacted concussion legislation since 2009. It directly applies to every coach, youth athlete, and parent who seeks to compete in the activities sanctioned by the SDHSAA.

March 31, 2011 – US Youth Soccer and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) teamed up to help protect participants of all youth sports who may be at risk of concussion. The campaign is an expansion of the "Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports".

Youth sport administrators and coaches are encouraged to order as many materials as needed and/or download extra copies of the concussion fact sheets. CDC's aim is to get the information into the hands – and heads – of all coaches, parents and athletes. Take the online training or order or download the "Heads Up" materials free-of-charge at www.cdc.gov/Concussion

Children and teens are more likely to sustain a concussion and take longer to recover than adults. Resting and avoiding physical and cognitive exertion are critical in the acute management of a sport-related concussion. No athlete should return to activity until asymptomatic at rest **and** with exertion. Athletes who are not fully recovered from an initial concussion are significantly more vulnerable to recurrent, cumulative and potentially catastrophic consequences of a secondary injury. As many as 40% of youth athletes who sustain a concussion return to the field of play sooner than modern guidelines suggest.

The Key elements of the new concussion-management and return to play legislation:

1. Informing and educating coaches, youth athletes and the athlete's parents of the nature and risks of a concussion.
2. Immediately removing a youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion in a game, practice or other training activity.
3. Allowing a youth athlete who has been removed from an athletic activity for a suspected concussion, to return to play only after the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care provider, trained in the evaluation and management of a concussion.

Other important features of the law include:

1. The health care provider can be a volunteer.
2. The law requires coaches to complete a short online training program free of charge to educate them on the nature and risk of concussion associated with athletic activities, and how to recognize the signs and symptoms consistent with a concussion.
3. The law is intended to help educate parents and youth athletes about the nature and risk associated with concussions, recognize the signs and symptoms and seek proper care.
4. There is no liability attaches to the legislation. It does not mandate any civil or criminal penalties, nor does it create greater liability for individuals and organizations. The education and awareness efforts, coupled with the requirement of medical clearance before return to play, have decreased the variability of care and overall liability.