

SPORTS CONCUSSION: NOT JUST A BELL-RINGER

Each school year, approximately 1,000 high school athletes in Oregon suffer at least one concussion. In this first TBI Research Brief, we present information about sports concussion and how to recognize and manage its consequences.

What is sports concussion?

- Sports concussion is a TBI which interferes with the brain's normal function.
- An athlete doesn't have to be knocked unconscious to have suffered a concussion.
- Young athletes who have a history of a previous concussion take longer to recover and may be three to six times more likely to sustain another concussion.
- Concussions are not just "football injuries." Girls playing soccer sustain concussions at a rate 60% higher than boys. In basketball, the rate is 300% that of the boys!
- If an athlete returns to sports while still experiencing concussion symptoms, they are at risk for a more severe concussion, or even a potentially fatal condition called Second Impact Syndrome.

What are the common symptoms of sports concussion?

- memory problems
- confusion/disorientation
- difficulty concentrating
- feeling "in a fog"
- delayed verbal and motor responses
- slurred/incoherent speech
- headaches
- fatigue
- disequilibrium/dizziness
- nausea/vomiting
- visual problems
- emotional changes (irritability, depression)

Symptoms can last for months or even years following the injury causing significant disability.

What is current best practice for managing sports concussion?

There are 2 basic rules for coaches, physicians, athletic trainers, and nurses at athletic events:

When in doubt, keep 'em out: If a young athlete experiences a blow to the head, through a fall, player to player contact, or other impact, they should be pulled from play.

No play without okay: Young athletes should never return to physical activity until their symptoms have resolved and they have been cleared by a physician.

What is happening in Oregon to advocate for more education and better management of sports concussion?

- Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) became the nation's first state athletic governing body to mandate a "no same day return to play" policy for concussed high school athletes.
- To address the needs of all young athletes, the Oregon Concussion Awareness and Management Program (OCAMP) has focused on educating physicians, coaches, administrators, athletes, parents, and others on the signs and symptoms of concussion, as well as management strategies, safe return to play, and prevention.
- The BIAOR has sponsored legislation-Senate Bill (SB) 348 "Max's Law"-requiring all Oregon public school coaches to have annual concussion training. The bill will be signed by the governor on June 26, 2009.

Where can I find out more information?

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Selected References/Resources:

- CDC Coaches ToolKit (free)-
www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/Coaches_Tool_Kit.htm
- OCAMP-
www.tbied.org/sports-concussion
- ACTive-Athletic Concussion Training for Coaches-
www.orcasinc.com
- ImPACT Computerized Baseline Assessment-
www.impacttest.com
- Summary and agreement statement of the 2nd International Conference on Concussion in Sport, Prague (2004).
Clinical Journal of Sport Medicine 15(2): 48-55.

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