

IHSAA SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT OF CONCUSSION



“Any athlete suspected of having a concussion should be evaluated by an appropriate health care professional that day. Any athlete with a concussion should be medically cleared by an appropriate healthcare professional prior to resuming participation in any practice or competition.”

The language above appears in all National Federation sports rule books as part of the suggested guidelines for the management of concussion. It reflects a heightened emphasis on the safety of athletes suspected of having a concussion, especially since the vast majority of concussions do not involve a loss of consciousness. The State of Indiana has a law (Ind. Code 20-34-7) which mandates a protocol to be observed in the event there is an athletic head injury or concussion sustained by a high school student in a high school practice or contest. The following guidelines provide the IHSAA’s suggested procedures to be followed when there may be a head injury or may be a concussion in a practice or in a contest in an IHSAA recognized sport.

1. A high school student athlete who may have sustained a concussion or a head injury in a high school practice or a high school contest in an IHSAA recognized sport should immediately have the existence of a concussion or a head injury confirmed by the school’s medical person, who (i) is an individual who has training in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries and who is either an Indiana athletic trainer ATC/L or an Indiana medical doctor (MD) or doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) holding an unlimited license to practice medicine in the state of Indiana, and (ii) has been assigned to a contest to provide medical services or has been assigned to provide medical services to students at a school’s athletic practice. If it is confirmed by the school’s medical person that the student athlete has not sustained a concussion or a head injury, the student athlete may continue participation in the contest or practice.
2. A high school student athlete, suspected of having sustained a concussion or a head injury in a high school practice or contest in an IHSAA recognized sport, and who is unable to have the absence of a concussion or head injury confirmed, should:
 - a. be removed from practice and play at the time of the concussion or head injury is sustained,
 - b. be evaluated immediately by an appropriate health care professional, who (i) is an Indiana medical doctor (MD) or doctor of osteopathic medicine (DO) who holds an unlimited license to practice medicine in the state of Indiana, and (ii) has training in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries,
 - c. follow a step-wise protocol which has provisions for the delay of the return to practice or play based upon the return of any signs or symptoms of concussion or head injury, and
 - d. not return to a practice or play (i) until the high school student athlete is cleared in writing to return to practice and play by the health care professional who conducted an evaluation of the student athlete, or (ii) any sooner than twenty-four (24) hours after the student athlete was removed from practice or play.
3. An official has a role in recognizing concussive signs and in making a report during a contest in an IHSAA recognized sport, and that role includes:
 - a. if, during a contest, and an official observes a player who exhibits concussive signs (including appearing dazed, stunned, confused, disoriented, to have memory loss, or the athlete is either unconscious or apparently unconscious), the official should immediately notify a coach that a player showed concussive signs and advise that the player should be seen by the school’s medical person or by an appropriate health care professional, and
 - b. if an official observes a player who exhibits concussive signs during a contest, and regardless of whether the student athlete returns to play or not, following the contest, an official’s report shall be filed with the school of the player who exhibited concussive signs, including the athletic director, by the official that initially observed the student who exhibited concussive signs; this report may be found on the IHSAA website at www.ihsaa.org.
4. In cases where an assigned IHSAA Tournament Series physician (MD/DO) is present, his or her decision regarding any potential concussion or head injury, or to forbid an athlete to return to competition, is final, binding and may not be overruled.