

## Concussion Policy

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### Definition

A concussion is a transient disruption of brain function typically caused by direct head trauma. It can occur following a blow to the head, neck or body that leads to a sudden shaking or jarring of the head. A concussion involves an alteration of consciousness. It may or may not include a loss of consciousness. A concussion may lead to headache, impaired thinking or judgment, memory dysfunction, speech difficulty, and loss of motor function including coordination and balance.

External signs of trauma such as bruising may not be present.

### Symptoms

Post-concussion symptoms may include but not limited to the following: headache, easy irritability, difficulty concentrating, nausea, loss of balance, and other motor and cognitive impairments. Its onset can be immediate with symptoms lasting for weeks to months, even longer.

Second impact syndrome is a life threatening condition in which an athlete has sustained a concussion and returns to athletic competition prior to symptom resolution and suffers another concussive blow. This “second impact” can lead to severe brain swelling, brain injury, and death.

### Concussion Protocol

When an athletic trainer is not present at practice or sporting event, it is the responsibility of the coach to identify the symptoms of a concussion and follow proper protocol. If a player sustains a concussion his or her parent/legal guardian and school administration should be informed.

A. If a student-athlete is **suspected** to have sustained a concussion he will be removed from play or practice and not return to play/practice until evaluated and cleared by a licensed health care professional.

B. If a student-athlete **has sustained** a concussion he may return to practice or play when he or she is symptom free at rest, symptom free during exercise, and has received a written medical release from the appropriate licensed health care professional.

An appropriate licensed healthcare professional is an individual(s) from the following professions who are designated as the persons to diagnose whether an athlete has or does not have a concussion:

- MD - A medical doctor licensed to practice medicine in South Carolina
- DO - A doctor of osteopathic medicine licensed to practice in South Carolina
- PA - A physician's assistant licensed to practice in South Carolina
- NP - A registered nurse practitioner licensed to practice in South Carolina
- AT - An athletic trainer certified nationally or by the State of South Carolina

Only an MD or DO shall release an athlete diagnosed as having a concussion to return to competition.

### Return to Play

A. No student-athlete who exhibits the signs and symptoms of concussion will return to play on the day of injury.

B. No student-athlete who has sustained a concussion will return to play until he or she no longer exhibits the signs or symptoms of concussion and only with the approval of a licensed health care professional.

This administrative rule is designed as a guide and is by no means all inclusive.

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