

Managers & Coaches Concussion Awareness Training

On May 14, 2009 the Governor of Washington Christine Gregoire signed the Zackery Lystedt Law. Effective July 26, 2009, the Lystedt Law directly affects youth sports and head injury policies particularly how you, as a coach, need to respond to player injuries. The new law requires that:

1. An informed consent must be signed by parents and youth athletes acknowledging the risk of head injury prior to practice or competition
2. A youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury must be removed from play – “when in doubt, sit them out”
3. A youth athlete who has been removed from play must receive written clearance from a licensed health care provider prior to returning to play

THE FACTS

- A concussion is a brain injury.
- All concussions are serious.
- Concussions can occur without loss of consciousness.
- Concussions can occur in any sport.
- Recognition and proper management of concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is an injury that changes how the cells in the brain normally work. A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. Concussions can also result from a fall or from players colliding with each other or with obstacles, such as a goalpost, even if they do not directly hit their head.

The potential for concussions is greatest in athletic environments where collisions are common. Concussions can occur, however, in any organized or unorganized sport or recreational activity. As many as 3.8 million sports and recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year.

RECOGNIZING A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION

To help recognize a concussion, you should watch for the following two things among your athletes:

1. A forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.
-and-
2. Any change in the athlete’s behavior, thinking, or physical functioning. (See the signs and symptoms of concussion.)

Managers & Coaches Concussion Awareness Training

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Signs observed by coaching staff

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

Symptoms Reported By Athlete

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not "feel right"

Athletes who experience any of these signs or symptoms after a bump or blow to the head should be kept from play until given permission to return to play by a health care professional (see Licensed Health Care Provided list below) with experience in evaluating for concussions. Signs and symptoms of concussion can last from several minutes to days, weeks, months, or even longer in some cases.

Remember, you can't see a concussion and some athletes may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury. If you have any suspicion that your athlete has a concussion, you should keep the athlete out of the game or practice.

PREVENTION AND PREPARATION

As a coach, you can play a key role in preventing concussions and responding to them properly when they occur. Here are some steps you can take to ensure the best outcome for your athletes and the team:

- **Educate athletes and parents about concussion.** Talk with athletes and their parents about the dangers and potential long-term consequences of concussion. Explain your concerns about concussion and your expectations of safe play to athletes, parents, and assistant coaches. Pass out the concussion fact sheets for athletes and for parents at the beginning of the season and again if a concussion occurs.

Managers & Coaches Concussion Awareness Training

- **Insist that safety comes first.**
 - Teach athletes safe playing techniques and encourage them to follow the rules of play.
 - Encourage athletes to practice good sportsmanship at all times.
 - Make sure athletes wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as shin guards). Protective equipment should fit properly, be well maintained, and be worn consistently and correctly.
 - Review the athlete fact sheet with your team to help them recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion.
 - Teach athletes and parents that it's not smart to play with a concussion. Sometimes players and parents wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Don't let athletes persuade you that they're "just fine" after they have sustained any bump or blow to the head. Ask if players have ever had a concussion.

- **Prevent long-term problems.** A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage, and even death. This more serious condition is called second impact syndrome.^{4,5} Keep athletes with known or suspected concussion from play until they have been evaluated and given permission to return to play by a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion. Remind your athletes: "It's better to miss one game than the whole season."

ACTION PLAN

WHAT SHOULD A COACH DO WHEN A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED?

1. **Remove the athlete from play.** Look for the signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head. Athletes who experience signs or symptoms of concussion should not be allowed to return to play. When in doubt, keep the athlete out of play.

2. **Ensure that the athlete is evaluated right away by an appropriate health care professional.** Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a coach, recording the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:
 - Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head
 - Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long
 - Any memory loss immediately following the injury
 - Any seizures immediately following the injury
 - Number of previous concussions (if any)

3. **Inform the athlete's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion.** Make sure they know that the athlete should be seen by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.

Managers & Coaches Concussion Awareness Training

4. **Allow the athlete to return to play only with permission from a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion.** A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. Prevent common long-term problems and the rare second impact syndrome by delaying the athlete's return to the activity until the player receives appropriate medical evaluation and approval for return to play.

Licensed Health Care Providers

What licensed health care providers are trained in the evaluation and treatment of concussions/brain injuries and authorized to allow the athlete to return to play?

- Medical Doctors (MD)
- Doctor of Osteopathy (DO)
- Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP)
- Physicians Assistant (PA)
- Licensed Certified Athletic Trainers (ATC)

Any athlete even suspected of suffering a concussion should be removed from the game or practice immediately. No athlete may return to activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance. Close observation of the athlete should continue for several hours. The new "Zackery Lystedt Law" in Washington now requires the consistent and uniform implementation of long and well-established return to play concussion guidelines that have been recommended for several years:

"a youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from competition at that time"

and

"...may not return to play until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussion and received written clearance to return to play from that health care provider."

For current and up-to-date information on concussions you can go to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports/>

As a condition of managing or coaching I have read the manager and coaches training information and will follow with practices on Concussions and Head Injuries, including educating my parents and players. I will also comply with all my league's policies regarding Concussions and Head Injuries. I will sit a player out when in doubt and not allow that player to return to practice or a game until cleared by professional medical personnel.

Manager/Coach Name Printed

Manager/Coach Signature

Date