A CONCUSSION IS A TYPE OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY CAUSED BY A FORCE TO THE HEAD OR BODY THAT LEADS TO A CHANGE IN BRAIN FUNCTION. IT IS NOT TYPICALLY ACCOMPANIED BY LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION

REPORTABLE SYMPTOMS

Symptoms that an athlete may report to a coach.

- Headache or head pressure
- Nausea or sick to stomach
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Neck or back pain
- Confusion, concentration or memory problems
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy or foggy
- Dizziness or seeing stars
- Low energy, sleepy or tired
- Trouble falling asleep
- Waking up throughout the night

OBSERVABLE SIGNS

Signs a coach may observe an athlete exhibiting.

- Dazed or stunned; looks to have “glassy eyes”
- Confusion or disorientation
- Vomiting
- Loss of balance or clumsiness
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty following directions
- Difficulty paying attention
- Loss of consciousness
- More emotional (angry, sad, irritable)

IMMEDIATE REFERRAL: WHEN TO CALL 911

- Loss of consciousness
- Vomiting
- Amnesia
- Unequal or dilated pupils
- Numbness or weakness
- Intensity of headache increases
- Changes in breathing/pulse
- Decreased coordination
- Getting more confused, restless, or agitated
- Very drowsy or cannot be awakened
- Unequal or dilated pupils
- Difficulty following directions
- Unequal or dilated pupils
- Amnesia
- Decreased coordination
- Fast or slow breathing
- Changes in consciousness
- Unequal pupils
- Drowsiness
- Headache or pressure
- Vomiting

HELPING TO REDUCE RISK OF CONCUSSION

- Have a conversation with your team, encouraging them to report if they or a teammate is suspected of having a concussion.
- Ensure a safe and positive team culture.
- Keep concussed athletes engaged with the team.
- Ensure proper fitting of protective equipment.
- Practice and emphasize proper tackling, blocking and falling techniques to help athletes avoid head contact.
- Educate players about game rules designed to reduce the risk of concussions.

TAKING CONCUSSIONS SERIOUSLY. YOUR ATHLETES’ FUTURE SHOULD BE A PRIORITY.

IF YOU SUSPECT AN ATHLETE COULD HAVE A CONCUSSION, HAVE THEM SEE AN ATHLETIC TRAINER OR TEAM PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY.

IMMEDIATE REMOVAL FROM PLAY

Hawaii Concussion Law (Act 262) is directed toward the 11-18 year old population. The law mandates if a concussion is suspected, that the individual must be removed from play immediately and evaluated by a medical professional trained in sport concussion management. That individual cannot return to play until a written medical clearance is obtained.

Continuing to play with a concussion is dangerous for young athletes because of the following:

- Second Impact Syndrome - Occurs when another concussion is sustained before a prior concussion is resolved. This causes rapid and severe brain swelling which results in permanent brain damage and/or death.
- Longer, more complicated recovery time - Average time to recover is longer and athletes have more difficulty in classroom and display more emotional changes.
- Increased risk of suffering another concussion - Rate of risk rises exponentially. A lesser amount of impact force is needed to sustain another concussion.
- Decreased athletic performance - Affects vision, reaction, balance and coordination. Greater risk of sustaining musculoskeletal injuries while playing with a concussion.

GRADUAL RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL

Before returning to any kind of physical activity, the following should be done:

1. Obtain written medical clearance from a medical professional trained in concussion management.
2. Check that athlete has been symptom free for at least 24-48 hours.
3. Check that the athlete is in school full time without any academic adjustments and is not experiencing symptoms while in school.
4. Have the athlete progress through Gradual Return to Play Protocol.

Steps three through seven are each separated by 24 hours, and monitored by an athlete trainer (ATC).

Concussion symptoms affect an individual’s physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing. A concussion can also affect an individual’s sleep pattern. The most common symptoms reported immediately after a concussion are headache and dizziness.

IMMEDIATE RECOVERY FROM PLAY

Do not leave concussed athlete unattended.

1. If available, notify the athletic trainer and/or medical staff on site IMMEDIATELY.
2. Check level of consciousness. If any level of unconsciousness (“knocked out”) call 911 and monitor airway, breathing and circulation.
3. Monitor observable signs and reported symptoms. Recommend the use of symptom checklist. Give completed checklist to parent for further monitoring.
4. Do not leave concussed athlete unattended. Have a responsible adult stay with concussed individual.
5. Notify parent; recommend a medical referral.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Get Schooled on Concussions
https://www.getschooledonconcussions.com
HEADS UP to Youth Sports
https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports

Hawaii state law requires that all coaches complete a concussion education course.

Get certified at: https://hcamp.info/coaches