

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 laws (Ind. Code 20-34-7) which mandate 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 game. The following guidelines provide the IHSAA’s suggested procedures to be followed when a student athlete in a contest or a practice in an IHSAA recognized sport sustains a head injury or concussion.

1. Any high school student athlete suspected of having sustained a concussion or a head injury in a high school practice or a high school contest:
 - (a) should be removed from play at the time of the concussion or head injury is sustained,
 - (b) should be evaluated by an appropriate health care professional immediately, and
 - (c) should not return to play in a practice or a game until the high school student athlete is cleared in writing to return to play by the health care professional who conducted an evaluation.
2. A high school student athlete should not return to play or practice any sooner than twenty-four (24) hours after the student is removed from play. After medical clearance by an appropriate health care professional, return to play should follow a step-wise protocol with provisions for the delay of the return to play based upon the return of any signs or symptoms.
3. The Official’s Role in Recognizing a Concussive Event:
 - (a) If, during a contest, an official observes a player and suspects that the player has suffered a head concussion or head injury by exhibiting concussive signs (including appearing dazed, stunned, confused, disoriented, to have memory loss, or the athlete is either unconscious or apparently unconscious), the official should notify a coach that a player is apparently injured and advise that the player should be examined by an appropriate health care Professional.
 - (b) If a concussion event occurred 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 removed player, including the athletic director, by the Official that initially removed the student athlete from play; this report may be found on the IHSAA website at www.ihsaa.org.
4. For purposes of this Concussion Guideline, an appropriate health care professional 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 who has training in the evaluation and management of concussions and head injuries
5. In cases where an assigned IHSAA tournament physician (MD/DO) is present, his or her decision regarding any potential concussion, or to forbid an athlete to return to competition, may not be overruled