**Concussion Information**

Concussions have gained much attention over the last decade and there is a lot of information that you have heard or read that may or may not be true or accurate. This short informational letter may help you with understanding a concussion, its symptoms, treatment, and how we, the athletic trainers, get your student athlete back onto the field/court.

**Information and Symptoms**

A concussion is considered a mild traumatic brain injury and many student athletes every year suffer a concussion. The majority of concussions are not emergency situations and if handled appropriately will lead to few if any long term effects. Symptoms of a concussion can include; headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, confusion, blurred vision, double vision, dilated pupils, ringing in the ears, sensitivity to noise and/or light, amnesia, loss of consciousness, balance problems, becoming more emotional, irritable, or drowsy, difficulty sleeping, and neck and/or back pain. In an adolescent with a concussion these symptoms generally last 7-14 days. In general, your child’s symptoms should be getting better and not worse. If you suspect they are getting worse, do not hesitate to take them to the emergency room or call 911.

**Treatment**

Recommendations for the care of your student athlete who has sustained or is suspected of sustaining a head injury:

Rest – This is one of the most important things your child can do. Most health care professionals recommend both physical and cognitive rest. This includes sleep, time away from their phone, tv, radio, and driving. Continuing to engage in these activities may exacerbate their symptoms and/or prolong the length of time your child experiences symptoms. It may also be beneficial for your child to stay at home from school for a day or two until their symptoms improve. There are also times when the doctor may advise academic accommodations in which we will send out the information to their teachers to make the appropriate changes.

Observation – Keep an eye on your child to ensure that their symptoms are not getting worse. In the past it was recommended to wake up a person with a suspected head injury every two hours, however, this is considered no longer necessary. Symptoms that indicate your child’s status may be deteriorating and thus becoming a medical emergency include:

* Headache that is getting increasingly worse and not better**\***
* Increased sensitivity to noise and/or light**\***
* Deterioration of vision
* Bleeding and/or clear fluid draining from the nose or ears
* Pupils that stay dilated and do not change size when exposed to light**\***
* Changes in mental status, i.e., becoming more and more confused, irritable, emotional, drowsy, or forgetful**\***

Medication – Acetaminophen (Tylenol) **ONLY**, no aspirin or ibuprofen (Advil), to help with headaches. Depending on the suspected severity of the head injury, this may be advised against in order to monitor the status of the athlete’s headache over the first 12 hours.

**\****While these are symptoms of a concussion, they should be, in the short term, staying the same or getting better, and should not be getting worse. If at any time your child’s symptoms are getting worse do not hesitate to take them to the emergency room or call 911.*

**Athletic Trainer Role**

UIL requires that if your student athlete is suspected of sustaining a concussion by **ANYONE** they must be removed from play. If upon evaluation by the athletic trainer your child is suspected of sustaining a concussion he/she will not be allowed to return to play/practice. At this point your child will need to be evaluated by a doctor. While we have certain doctors who we recommend who specialize in concussion management, you are free to take your child to whomever you prefer. Once your child has been released, generally upon being symptom free for 24 hours, the athletic training staff can begin the return to play protocol as outlined by the state and UIL. This is a 5 step process that must be done in order and the athlete must go through it without exhibiting any return of symptoms. Once completed your child will be sent home with a form for you to sign indicating that we have completed these steps. It must be turned in before your child can return to athletic competition.

While this is not a comprehensive review of a concussion, its symptoms and treatment, we hope that this gives you an accurate base of knowledge and understanding as to what to expect if your student athlete is suspected of or has sustained a concussion. If you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

Thank you,

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