

# 3.10 CONCUSSION AND TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

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## Policy

At Delaware County Community College, the safety of our student-athletes is important. The College recognizes that head injuries, particularly sport-induced concussions, pose a health risk to student-athletes participating in intercollegiate athletics. In order to protect the well-being of each student-athlete, the College has implemented policies and procedures to assess and identify those student-athletes who have suffered a concussion. These policies and procedures are directed and overseen by the Director of Wellness, Athletics, and Recreation or Designee. The Director or Designee has final say over all return-to-play decisions.

## Procedures & Protocols

The following provides more information on identifying and understanding concussions as well as procedures and protocols, which are identified by the NCAA as recommended best practices for a Concussion/Traumatic Brain Injury Management Plan.

### What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury or change in brain function that:

- Is caused by some force, such as a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body.
- Can change the way a student's brain normally works.
- Can occur during practices and/or contests in any sport.
- Can happen even if a student has not lost consciousness.
- Can be serious even if a student has just been "dinged" or "had their bell rung."
- Can include measures of neurologic and cognitive dysfunction.

All concussions are serious. A concussion can affect a student's ability to do schoolwork and other activities (such as playing video games, working on a computer, studying, driving, or exercising). Most students with a concussion get better, but it is important to give the concussed student's brain time to heal.

### What are the symptoms and signs of a concussion?

Following a concussion, the athlete may experience a variety of symptoms. Most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness. It is important to remember that some symptoms may appear right away and some may be delayed. Symptoms, as well as symptom severity, may differ between individuals; however, a combination of symptoms typically occurs. Concussions cannot be seen; however, in a potentially concussed student, one or more of the symptoms listed below may become apparent and/or that the student "doesn't feel right" soon after, a few days after, or even weeks after the injury.

#### Symptoms

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness

- Double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Confusion
- Ringing in the ears

#### Signs

- Difficulty paying attention
- Decreased ability to play
- Inability to perform daily activities
- Reduced attention
- Sleep disturbances
- Personality change
- Slurred speech
- Memory problems
- Loss of consciousness

### Notification and Recognition of Symptoms

**What should students do if they believe that they or someone else may have a concussion?**

Due to the serious nature of this injury, concussions need to be recognized and diagnosed as soon as possible. Students-athletes feeling any of the symptoms (mentioned) should make their coach aware immediately.

**What should the athletic trainer or coach do if a player appears to be impaired or they suspect that a student athlete might have a concussion?**

The Certified Athletic Trainer would immediately remove the student from the competition for a thorough sideline head injury evaluation during home and away contests.

### Concussion Education

In accordance with recommendations, student-athletes will be annually presented with educational materials about the signs and symptoms of a concussion. Student-athletes will be required to sign the Delaware County Community College Student-Athlete Concussion Statement, accepting the responsibility for truthfully reporting of his or her injuries and illness, including signs and symptoms of a concussion. Coaches and Certified Athletic Trainers will take the Heads Up online concussion training course annually and the College will keep documentation of this training.

### Baseline Testing

Delaware County Community College Athletics will use ImPACT to record an on-line baseline assessment and post-injury testing at appropriate time intervals for all student-athletes. ImPACT is a concussion assessment tool that measures visual and verbal memory, reaction time, and processing speed, on a computer.

### Evaluation Process

When a student-athlete shows any signs, symptoms or behavior consistent with a concussion, the student-athlete shall be immediately removed from athletic participation and evaluated by the team Certified Athletic Trainer. If the Certified Athletic Trainer determines that a student-athlete has or may have a concussion, the Trainer must report that information to the head coach. Next, the student-athlete will be evaluated by the appropriate qualified medical personnel sufficiently familiar with current concussion management. The student-athlete will be examined to

determine whether the student has a concussion and determine when the student is cleared to return to participate in athletics.

#### **Same Day Return-to-Play**

A student-athlete diagnosed with a concussion or suspected of having a concussion shall be withheld from the competition or practice and will not return to any athletic activity for at least one calendar day and until cleared by the appropriate qualified medical personnel.

#### **Return-to-Play Guidelines**

Return-to-play is the process of deciding when an injured or ill student-athlete may safely return to practice or competition. It is the goal of Delaware County Community College to return an injured or ill student-athlete to practice or competition without putting the individual or others at undue risk for injury or illness.

The return to play progression is a 5 step process.

1. No activity - Directly after being diagnosed with a concussion, the student-athlete should have total physical and mental (cognitive) rest.
2. Once the student-athlete has shown progression and is asymptomatic with cognitive and physical rest, the student-athlete will complete post traumatic ImpACT testing and compare to baseline. Once cleared for limited activity, he or she will move to the next step.
3. Sport-specific exercise- Basic low impact drills associated with sport. (No head impact activities)
4. Non-contact training drills- Progress to more complex drills.
5. Full contact Practice- After receiving medical clearance, athletes may resume normal training activities.
6. Return to Play

#### **Return to Classroom Guidelines**

With the assistance of the Certified Athletic Trainer, Delaware County Community College Athletics Department will work diligently to educate coaches, academic staff, and athletes on the importance of a safe return to the classroom for any concussed athlete. Certain activities that take place in a classroom may exacerbate an athlete's symptoms, which could ultimately lead to a delayed recovery and/or return to play.

1. Once a student-athlete is diagnosed with a concussion, they should be withheld from classroom activities for at least one calendar day.
2. The Certified Athletic Trainer responsible for the injured student-athlete should send an email to the Athletics Director who will help navigate the return-to-learn process for the student-athlete.
  - a. The email will dictate the name of the athlete, the date of injury, and the signs and symptoms that are present or may arise.
  - b. The Certified Athletic Trainer will provide the Athletic Director with any medical documentation that is needed to confirm the diagnosis of a concussion.
3. If the student-athlete cannot tolerate light cognitive activity, he or she should remain at home or as directed by a physician.
4. Once the student-athlete can tolerate cognitive activity without return of symptoms, he/she should return to the classroom/ studying as tolerated. At any point, if the student athlete becomes symptomatic, or scores on clinical measures decline,

the Certified Athletic Trainer and/or health care provider should be notified and the student-athlete's cognitive activity reassessed by a health care provider with expertise in sport-related concussion.

5. The extent of academic adjustments needed should be decided by a multi-disciplinary team that may include the Certified Athletic Trainer, Athletic Director, coaches, counselor and/or dean, and the office of disability services representatives as needed. The level of multi-disciplinary involvement should be made on a case-by-case basis.

#### **Non-Athlete Students**

When the College becomes aware of a non-athlete student that has had a concussion or is suspected of having a concussion the Return to Classroom Guidelines above will be used in dealing with the student.