



Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS)
Division of Athletics



Concussions in High School Sports—LCPS Guidelines for Parents, Athletes, & Staff
IMPORTANT INFORMATION—READ CAREFULLY

Loudoun County School Board dba Loudoun County Public Schools Student-Athlete Concussion Guidelines:

Sections 22.1-271.5 and 22.1-271.6 of the Code of Virginia directs Virginia school divisions to develop and distribute guidelines for policies dealing with suspected concussions in student-athletes. LCPS obtains written acknowledgment (from students and parents) of the information provided, regarding LCPS’s managing of, and identification of, suspected concussions in student-athletes. This Guideline details the “Return to Sports” and the “Student Support Plan” recommendations for safe return to school day activities.

1. Concussion Facts:

- A concussion is a **traumatic brain injury** caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, face, neck, or body which results in a rapid, short-lived impairment of neurologic function. A concussion occurs when the brain is violently rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull **A student-athlete does not have to lose consciousness to suffer a concussion.**
- Concussions can occur in any sport, not just contact sports. **All student-athletes are at risk.** A student-athlete does not have to sustain a blow to the head to suffer a concussion.
- A concussion may have multiple signs and/or symptoms that may appear immediately after the injury or develop or evolve over several minutes, hours, or days.
- Concussion signs and/or symptoms may last a few days, several months, or longer.
- A concussion can affect a student-athlete from a medical and educational perspective, altering their ability to do schoolwork and other activities. Student-athletes who have concussive symptoms and return to school without a plan for supporting learning, may be at risk for delayed recovery and ongoing setbacks with academic performance.
- A student-athlete **may return to light physical and cognitive work while still having symptoms if supervised by an approved LCPS healthcare professional.**
- Concussions are treatable injuries. Most student-athletes who experience a concussion can recover completely if they do not return to play prematurely. Premature return to play may delay and/or impede recovery. After a concussion, there is a period in which the brain is particularly vulnerable to further injury. **If a student-athlete sustains a second concussion during this period, the risk of prolonged symptoms increases significantly, and the consequences of a second concussive impact may be severe and potentially catastrophic (i.e., “Second Impact Syndrome”).**

2. Concussion Signs and Symptoms May Include:

Cognitive

- Difficulty remembering
- Difficulty concentrating
- Confusion
- Feeling foggy

Physical

- Headache
- Blurry Vision
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Sensitivity to light/sound
- Balance/Coordination problems

Emotional

- Irritability
- Sadness
- Moodiness
- Crying more
- Anxiety/Worry

Sleep

- Sleeping more
- Sleeping less
- Drowsiness

3. Concussion Event Action Plan (if a student-athlete suffers a suspected concussion):

Student-athlete **shall be immediately removed from play**, be it a game or practice and **may not return to play or practice on that same day**. The parent/guardian and school nurse will be notified of the suspected concussion incident. The Athletic Trainer may contact other members of the Concussion Management Team (CMT) based on each individual case. This may include a school administrator, counselor, psychologist, nurse, teacher, parent/guardian, or appropriate licensed health care provider. Continuing to participate in physical activity after a suspected concussion that same day may lead to worsening concussion symptoms, increasing risk of further injury, and even a risk of death. **WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT.**

- Student-athlete or parent/guardian must contact the school athletic trainer as soon as possible, and, if deemed necessary, have a follow-up evaluation performed by an approved healthcare professional. If signs and symptoms increase in severity and/or number, and the condition continues to deteriorate, then the student-athlete should be transported to the nearest hospital.
- Student-athlete **must be evaluated by an approved healthcare professional and be cleared before returning to play or practice**: <https://concussion.gmu.edu>. The healthcare professional's written diagnosis indicating the student-athlete's status shall be provided to the Athletic Trainer for further clearance. **Approved healthcare professionals include MD-Medical Doctor, DO-Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine, PA-Physician Assistant, CNP-Certified Nurse Practitioner, ATC-Certified Athletic Trainer, and/or Neuropsychologist.** A multi-disciplinary team approach will be taken during the concussion recovery, utilizing all members of the CMT to ensure efficient and timely communication, care, and monitoring of the student-athlete.
- The CMT will provide support recommendations to teachers/staff in the form of a **Student Support Plan** as the student progresses to recovery. If the student-athlete is three (3) to four (4) weeks' post-injury without significant improvement, a referral to a concussion specialist may be recommended and a 504 plan should be considered.

4. Post-Concussion Assessment and Neurocognitive Testing:

- To safeguard our student-athletes, LCPS offers the Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing (ImPACT) program as a tool to assist in the evaluation and management of concussions. ImPACT is widely used and the most scientifically validated computerized concussion evaluation tool. Given the inherent difficulties in concussion management, it is important to manage concussions on an individualized basis and to perform baseline testing and/or post-injury testing. This type of concussion assessment can help to objectively evaluate the concussed student-athletes post-injury condition and track recovery towards appropriate return to learn and safe return to play, thus preventing the cumulative effects of a concussion. The decision and timing for proper post-injury testing will be determined by the supervising athletic trainer. A "baseline" ImPACT evaluation shall be conducted by the LCPS athletic trainer with assistance from the coaches trained to administer baseline testing.
- To more accurately assess the extent of the injury and determine the appropriate course of action, the athletic trainer may use tools such as a sideline evaluation (e.g., SACVNI, SCAT5, Modified BESS), vestibular-ocular motor screening (VOMS), a thorough and relevant history, and input from necessary stakeholders.

5. What Must Be Done by Student-Athletes, Parents, and Coaches?

- **Concussion Education/Prevention:** At the beginning of the athletic season, coaches, student-athletes, parents, teachers, and administrators will be educated on recognition, prevention, and management of suspected concussions and their possible short- and long-term effects (including acute mental health changes). Please refer to the "LCPS Concussion Documents for Coaches, Parents, and Teachers."
- All Student-Athletes, Parents, Coaches, Teachers, and Administrators must be aware of the "Signs and Symptoms" of a concussion as listed above.

- Direct student-athletes to immediately inform the athletic trainer and/or coach if they experience such sign and/or symptoms.
- Instruct student-athletes to tell the athletic trainer and/or coach if they suspect that a teammate has a concussion.
- Ask teachers to monitor any decrease in grades or changes in behavior that could indicate a concussion.
- Report concussions to the athletic trainer and coaches to help monitor injured student-athletes as they move to the next sports season.

7. Supporting Safe “Return to School Day Activities” for Student-Athletes:

- The student’s return to school activities should be supervised by the entire LCPS CMT team, which may include, school administrators, counselors, teachers, school nurses, and athletic trainers.
- The student may receive informal academic supports recommended by the CMT in the Student Support Plan. The student’s teachers are encouraged to make adjustments in the classroom as needed to reduce or prevent symptoms, while engaging with the Medical Accommodations and/or EHS team prior to making these adjustments.

8. Supporting Safe “Return to Sports Activities” for Student-Athletes:

No member of a LCPS athletic team shall return to participate in, an athletic event or training after the student experiences a concussion, unless all the following conditions have been met:

- The student attends all classes, maintains a full academic load, and requires no instructional modifications, except for extra time allotted to complete previous assignments (missed because of suspected/confirmed concussive incident).
- The student no longer exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion, (at rest or with exertion), that were not present before the concussion.
- The student is asymptomatic during or following periods of supervised exercise that is gradually intensifying.
- The student receives a written medical release from an appropriately licensed healthcare professional.

Affirm your agreement by signing below and returning the signed form to your student’s school.
Keep a copy for your records.

<p>I have received and read the Loudoun County School Board d/b/a Loudoun County Public Schools Student-Athlete Concussion Guidelines and grant my consent and permission for the Student-Athlete to participate in the Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing (ImPACT) program, including Baseline and Post-Concussion Cognitive Testing. Furthermore, I acknowledge, understand, and certify by my signature below that I agree to the protocols of the LCPS concussion program for the student-athlete’s best welfare and safe participation in sports for Loudoun County Public Schools.</p>	
<p>Student-Athlete Name (print):</p>	
<p>Student-Athlete Signature:</p>	<p>Date:</p>
<p>Parent/Guardian Name (print):</p>	
<p>Parent/Guardian Signature:</p>	<p>Date:</p>