



FUQUA SCHOOL ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT
INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

CONCUSSIONS

A **concussion** is a brain injury characterized by an onset of impairment of cognitive and/or physical functioning, and is caused by a blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that causes a sudden jarring of the head (i.e., a helmet to the head, being knocked to the ground). A concussion can occur with or without a loss of consciousness, and proper management is essential to the immediate safety and long-term future of the injured individual. A concussion can be difficult to diagnose, and failing to recognize the signs and symptoms in a timely fashion can have dire consequences.

Most athletes who experience a concussion can recover completely as long as they do not return to play prematurely. The effects of repeated concussions can be cumulative, and after a concussion, there is a period in which the brain is particularly vulnerable to further injury. If an athlete sustains a second concussion during this period, the risk of permanent brain injury increases significantly and the consequences of a seemingly mild second concussion can be very severe, and even result in death (i.e., "second impact syndrome").

Decisions regarding return to play must be made by an **appropriate licensed health care provider**. This includes a physician, physician assistant, osteopath or athletic trainer licensed by the Virginia State Board of Nursing. **Return to play** means to participate in non-medically supervised practice or athletic competition.

From the Virginia Board of Education *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student Athletes*

Short and Long-Term Effects of Concussions

Traumatic brain injury can, and often does, lead to brain damage. Also, concussions can lead to serious physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms. Recent research suggests that the detrimental effects of even one concussion may linger for 30 years or longer in a person's life. The implications from repeated concussions are even more serious. The following are the short-term and long-term consequences of a concussion:

Short-term concussive effects (lasting a few hours to a few weeks and may appear immediately after the blow/trauma leading to the concussion or may appear after a few days or weeks) include:

Physical

- headaches
- vertigo
- change in sleep patterns
- lightheadedness
- tinnitus (ringing in ears)
- coma
- blurred vision/seeing stars
- being dazed
- nausea/vomiting
- difficulty with mobility or coordination
- loss of consciousness

Emotional

- depression
- frustration
- mood swings, change in personality
- fear of future harm
- overarching anxiety
- fear of future harm guilt
- feeling helpless to protect self, family
- feeling easily overwhelmed
- guilt

Cognitive

- partial or total memory loss
- slow reaction time
- loss of concentration
- difficulty talking and communication

Long-term concussive effects (symptoms that last a few months to many years) include:

- long-term memory loss
- depression
- emotional distress
- increased possibility of suicide attempts
- slowing of some types of movements

Concussions are cumulative. Each time a concussion occurs, it is easier to get another concussion in the future, and the short and long-term effects of each repeated concussions become more severe. Most concussions, however, are not too serious, but even one can lead to serious short and long-term consequences.

Further information on concussions can be found through the Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/TraumaticBrainInjury/.



FUQUA SCHOOL CONCUSSION POLICY

Fuqua School recognizes that the cornerstone of concussion management is physical and cognitive rest until symptoms resolve and a gradual program of exertion prior to medical clearance and return to play. The school understands that resulting impairments can be multifaceted and can include cognitive, behavioral, and/or physical deficits. Impairments can be mild or severe, temporary, or permanent, resulting in partial or total loss of function. Because concussions are so varied and unpredictable, it is difficult to forecast the recovery for a student with a brain concussion.

Any Fuqua School student athlete suspected by his/her coach, trainer, or licensed health care provider of sustaining a concussion or brain injury in a practice or game will be removed from play immediately.

Any student athlete who has been removed from play due to a suspected concussion or brain injury, will not return to play the same day of the injury nor until evaluated by an appropriate licensed health care provider and approved by the health care provided to return to play. Approval must be in writing.

Following return to play, coaches will monitor the injured student athlete closely to check for symptoms. If symptoms are observed, the parent will be notified, and the student will be required to be evaluated by an approved health care provided before returning to play.

All student athletes will be advised of the symptoms and dangers of concussions, including the potential dangers of getting a concussion when a prior concussion has not properly healed. They will also be informed regarding what to do if they notice behavior in another player symptomatic of a concussion.

All Fuqua School coaches will be trained in how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion, strategies to reduce the risk of concussions, and Fuqua School's Concussion Policy.

At the beginning of each sports season, parents of the student athletes will be provided information regarding concussions and the school's concussion policy.

Sign below acknowledging you have received this information and have reviewed it with your child. Please return this to the coach.

Print Parent's name

Parent's signature

Date