



# IREDELL COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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## **Concussion Guidelines For Athletic Programs**

### **Definition**

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. Even what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

### **Prevention**

The Iredell County Parks & Recreation Department recognizes that the risk of a concussion is present with certain types of sports. Education, including following safety/sportsmanship guidelines, use of proper athletic equipment, and appropriate recognition/treatment, will help minimize the risk(s) of such injuries.

### **Education**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has developed a series of educational materials, the HEADS UP program, with the goal to help protect children and teens from concussions and other serious brain injuries. They recognize that sports programs and schools are key places to share messages that will help improve brain injury prevention, recognition, and response. The CDC/HEADS UP has resources available for administrators, coaches, parents, and medical providers. This information is also applicable to adult sports, but specifically emphasizes youth programs since youth are more likely to get concussions and can take longer to recover. ICPRD sports programs utilizes these resources in order to educate those involved with our programs.

**HEADS UP Website and Resources:** [www.cdc.gov/headsup/](http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/)

Concussion education must be provided for all team staff (coaches, assistant coaches, managers) and officials (umpires, referees), as well as parents and players in organized sport programs. Education of team staff and officials will require them to view an education video on concussions. Education of parents and players will be accomplished through preseason meetings and/or information sheets. Education will include, but not be limited to, the definition and causes of concussions, signs and symptoms of concussions, and procedures for treatment/return to play.

**For Team Staff & Officials:** Iredell County Parks & Recreation Department will require all team staff (coaches, assistant coaches, managers) and officials (umpires, referees) under ICPRD management to view the online education video on concussions. This includes any team staff/officials who are: required to complete a background check/risk management approval via ICPRD, and/or those who are paid by ICPRD (ex: contracted officials).

A certificate of completion will be provided at the end of the online training session, which must be saved and/or printed for verification purposes (the online training will not store the certificate). **This training must be completed/renewed every 2 years (24 months from date of previous training).**

1. Team Staff: Each Organization/Association provides a list of team(s) staff and a copy of the concussion training certificates to ICPRD:

- a. ICPRD must receive a copy of the certificate prior to each individual being allowed to participate with the team.
  - b. No team(s) may begin practice without at least one representative from that team having completed the training course. Team staff that have not completed the course will not be allowed to participate with the team for practices or games.
2. Officials: Individual officials/employees and/or contracted officials must provide a copy of the concussion training certificates to ICPRD, prior to their start with the athletic season. Officials will not be assigned to games until the certificate has been received by ICPRD.

**Concussion Training Video:** [www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/Training/](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/Training/)

**Concussion Resources For Coaches:** [www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/coach](http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/coach)

**For Parents/Players:** Educational materials\* regarding concussions will be provided to parents/guardians and players during the registration process, or prior to participation by the player in practices or games. Parents/guardians (or players, if age 18 or older) will need to sign a form to acknowledge that they received and understand these materials, are aware of the risks of head injury from participation in these activities, and will provide medical care for the player if a concussion is suspected. Organizations/Associations should submit the signed acknowledgment forms to ICPRD prior to player participation.

**Parent Resources:** [www.cdc.gov/headsup/parents/](http://www.cdc.gov/headsup/parents/)

*\* Resources, including the "Concussion Fact Sheet", are provided by the CDC/Heads Up program, and should not be mistaken for medical advice given by ICPRD. If you have questions or concerns regarding concussions, please consult your physician.*

### **Injury Guidelines**

Per the CDC recommendations, if a concussion is suspected, the following guidelines should be put into action by team staff, parent, or player (see details on the CDC/HEADS UP website):

1. **Remove the athlete from play immediately.** "When in doubt, sit them out"
2. **Ensure that the athlete is evaluated by a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.** *If a player exhibits any of the more serious "danger signs", call 9-1-1 or take the athlete to the emergency department right away. (See the "Concussion Fact Sheet" for signs, symptoms, and danger signs).* If there is any doubt as to whether a player has sustained a concussion, it should be treated as a concussion (until notified otherwise by a medical provider).
3. **Inform the athlete's parents/guardians about the possible concussion and the need for follow-up medical care.**
  - a. ICPRD has a "Notification of Potential Concussion" form that needs to be signed by the parent and coach in the event of a suspected concussion-related injury.
4. **Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury, and for at least 24 hours.** *An athlete should only return to play with written permission from a health care professional, who is experienced in evaluating for concussion.*

### **Notification**

If a player is suspected of a concussion, in addition to informing parents and completing the "Notification of Potential Concussion" form, team staff will need to notify their athletic association/coordinator within 48 hours, who will then notify ICPRD of the injury. Once the player has received written notification from their medical provider that they are cleared to return to play, a copy of the authorization will be provided to the coach, association/coordinator, and ICPRD.

## **Return To Play Process**

Persons who have been diagnosed with a concussion require both physical and cognitive rest. There are many risks to premature return to play including: a greater risk for a second concussion because of a lower concussion threshold, second impact syndrome (abnormal brain blood flow that can result in death), exacerbation of any current symptoms, and possibly increased risk for additional injury due to alteration in balance. No athlete should return to play while symptomatic. Athletes are prohibited from returning to play the day the concussion is sustained.

**Athletes may NOT return to athletic activities until they have been symptom-free for a minimum of 24 hours and have been evaluated by, and receive written and signed authorization to return to activities from a licensed physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant.**

An athlete should return to sports practices under the supervision of an appropriate health care professional. Below are five GRADUAL steps that the team staff, parent, player, and the health care professional can follow to help safely return an athlete to play. These steps should not be completed in one day, but instead over days, weeks, or months. General recommendations indicate each step should take at least 24 hours to complete before proceeding to the next step, however each case will vary and **physician recommendations should be followed. ICPRD will not be held responsible for any variations in physician recommendations. These steps are an example of the process a physician may recommend for a player who has sustained a concussion. Team staff can reference this to assist with the return-to-play process.**

**BASELINE:** Athletes should not have any concussion symptoms during normal activities. Athletes should only progress to the next level of exertion if they do not have any symptoms at the current step.

### **STEP 1: Light Aerobic Activity**

Begin with light low-impact aerobic exercise only to increase an athlete's heart rate. This means about 5 to 10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking, or light jogging. No weight lifting at this point.

### **STEP 2: Moderate Activity**

Continue with activities to increase an athlete's heart rate with body or head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weightlifting (reduced time and/or reduced weight from their typical routine).

### **STEP 3: Heavy Non-Contact Activity**

Add heavy non-contact physical activity, such as sprinting/ running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine, non-contact sport-specific drills (in 3 planes of movement).

### **STEP 4: Practice & Full Contact**

Athlete may return to practice and full contact (if appropriate for the sport) in controlled practice.

### **STEP 5: Competition**

Athlete may return to competition.

If an athlete's symptoms come back or she or he gets new symptoms when becoming more active at any step, this is a sign that the athlete is pushing him or herself too hard. The athlete should stop these activities and the athlete's health care provider should be contacted. After more rest and no concussion symptoms, the athlete should begin at the previous step.

*(These steps are per the CDC recommendations, in combination with the Zurich Progressive Exertion Protocol)*