Basic Concussion Policy Information for Students and Parents

Concussion prevention, management and return to play decisions are of utmost importance to the Connecticut College Sports Medicine Team. Our protocol and policy is informed by the NCAA guidelines and the Concussion Consensus Statement as determined by the International Conference on Concussion in Sport. We make periodic and timely reviews of the best available scientific literature and upgrade our policy accordingly.

While the following is in no way meant to provide a complete understanding of a very complex subject, concussion can be described as the temporary impairment of normal brain function induced by direct biomechanical forces to the head itself or by those to the body that are transmitted to the head. It most often results in short lived symptoms that resolve spontaneously, but in a small percentage of cases may cause more severe and longer lasting symptoms of weeks or months duration or an intracranial bleed requiring immediate hospitalization. Repetitive concussions can lead to long-term neurological and functional deficits.

Symptoms of concussion may include headache, nausea, dizziness and balance deficits, visual disturbance, sensitivity to light or noise, fatigue, learning and concentration deficits, insomnia, confusion, amnesia, aggression or irritability, depression, seizures, loss of consciousness and other impairments to normal functioning.

Prevention

Student athletes and the coaching staff are provided education at the beginning of each season regarding mechanisms of injury, signs and symptoms, the importance of reporting all suspected concussions and the precautions inherent in medication usage while competing. ImPact computerized concussion assessment baselines for cognitive function are completed for those competing in Basketball, Diving, Field Hockey, Ice Hockey, Lacrosse, Pole Vaulting, Sailing, Soccer and Water Polo. We are committed to expanding the numbers of teams that receive these baselines and add tests as their reliability and validity can be proven.
Management
On-field tests and in-office assessments of signs and symptoms are provided for all those suspected of concussion, and follow up care is provided on a daily basis throughout the entire process of recovery. Periodic post injury testing through ImPact is included in this paradigm. Patients are given written and oral instruction for care and are often paired with a teammate who stays with them, wakes them at night and reports back to us. All those suspected of significant injury receive follow-up through our campus ER Physician Dr. Kenneth Larsen, area specialists and hospitals whether suffering from acute severity or long term problems.

While severe signs and symptoms are always a great concern, it is important to remember that most concussions are much milder in nature and respond very well to a period of cognitive and physical rest. As an aid to full recovery, we often insist that students suspend their studies for a period of time as well as their use of computers, video games, television, smart phones and their exposure to loud noise and bright lights. All these tend to prolong symptoms and interfere with timely resolution. We also contact professors and deans on behalf of students and make arrangements for academic assistance where appropriate.

Return to Play

Our return-to-play decisions are based upon a 5 day (minimum) protocol that begins following full symptom resolution and return to academic participation. This includes cognitive testing, daily evaluation and gradual increases in tolerated exercise and activity. No athlete is allowed return-to-play status until all signs and symptoms have completely resolved and graded exercise testing can be achieved without recurrence of symptoms.

Please feel free to call us with concerns or questions about this policy. We fully recognize the tremendous importance of appropriate concussion management for all athletic participants at Connecticut College and welcome the opportunity to be of assistance.