

Concussions or “Mild Traumatic Brain Injuries” are a huge concern in athletics today. The reason for the increased attention is new knowledge regarding the short and long term risks of concussion. We have learned several potential hazards are associated with these injuries such as:

- **Early onset dementia**
- **Prolonged mood disturbances like depression and anxiety**
- **Compromise of peak mental performance**
- **Recurrent concussions**
- **An increased risk of more complicated concussions**
- **Compromise of school performance for prolonged periods of time**
- **In rare cases.....death....from a condition called “Second Impact Syndrome”**

As we have become more aware of the risks of concussion, we have also realized that these injuries are grossly under diagnosed. In years gone by, athletes with injuries that we know now should have been considered concussions were sent right back into sporting events where they were put at risk for more hits. These further hits put them at risk for several potential complications.

So what does a concussion look like? The initial injury should cause some type of confusion. The medical staff calls this “an alteration of mental status”. **Athletes will complain of:**

First:

- Confusion
- Inability or difficulty remembering things
- Headache
- Blurry vision
- Difficulty with loud sounds or bright lights
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Feeling like they are “in a fog”

And later on:

- Continued difficulty concentrating
- Continued headache
- Mood changes
- Poor appetite
- Sleep problems
-among others

The NCAA, NFL, NHL as well as many other professional organizations have made public their new expectations that no athlete with a concussion should return to sport the same day. These organizations have further stated that health professionals should be involved in diagnosing and managing these injuries to insure they are caught and addressed.

The **principals of concussion management** at this time include:

- 1) Removal from the event
- 2) Monitoring and evaluation for more severe or concerning injury
- 3) Rest of the brain until typical symptoms have completely resolved
- 4) A progression of activity back to play while being monitored for symptom recurrence.

In the Play Safe coverage area these principals are part of a protocol for concussion management that is in place to assure that all concussed athletes are managed appropriately. The medical staff needs everyone who is involved in sports from the athletes to their parents, from the coaches to administration, to help us all treat these injuries with the respect they deserve.