



Creating a Concussion Protocol

What is a Concussion Protocol?

Concussion protocols are a way to ensure athletes stay out of practice and games until they are cleared to return safely to play. It is simply an agreed upon plan to manage concussions. Due to the nature of concussions, it is important that each athlete gets individualized attention during the screening process. That is why a concussion protocol can include policies, tools and assessments as a part of the care given to an athlete.

Who needs a Concussion Protocol?

Any organization that has athlete's (children or adults) at risk for a concussion. Concussions can happen anywhere like work, sports or in an accident, so protocols don't need to be limited to just sports organizations. In the United States and Canada, legislation is in place requiring an athlete to be removed from play and put through a Return to Play protocol for youth athletes.

Who is usually involved in a Concussion Protocol?

Concussion Protocols are most effective when a variety of stakeholders are involved in the process. This can include coaches, teammates, and care physicians, among others. Here is a list of individuals to involve with your concussion protocol:

1. Assign a Point Person – This person will oversee your concussion protocol as part of diagnosis and management. They should be a trained healthcare professional.
2. Athletic Trainer – They will provide the initial evaluation, often on the sideline, for student athletes. They will also take part in the management portion of the case and could make a great point person.
3. School Nurse/Teachers/Counselors (for schools) – As a student goes through the concussion protocol, they will need the option to talk to someone or be understood if the symptoms don't allow them to succeed in the classroom.
4. Rehabilitation – If the concussions causes a need for therapy, physical therapists, occupations therapists, speech language pathologists and other therapy-based professions can help to support. It is helpful to have contacts to refer the athlete.
5. Parents – A parent is with the athlete at home and needs to ensure they are monitoring symptoms when no one else is around.

A Standard Concussion Protocol:

An organization will differ on their approach to a concussion protocol, but here are some key points.

1. Have a definition for a concussion so stakeholders can have a baseline.
2. Educate stakeholders on concussions. This includes symptoms and recognition.
3. Provide a pre-season baseline testing protocol
4. Create your sideline assessment criteria and build the procedure for assessment and removal.

PLAYER'S HEALTH

5. Build clinical evaluation procedures to monitor and manage
6. For schools, create academic guidelines to assist athletes in the classroom
7. Create a Return to Play procedure and guideline. (See our sample strategy: [link to next content piece](#))