

Darien Public School Athletics - Concussion Return to Play Protocol
based on the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
and
the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC)
(as part of the Section 10-149b of Connecticut General Statutes)

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What is a Concussion?

“A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury-or TBI-caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. This sudden movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging brain cells.” (CDC, 2021).

Return to Play (RTP) Protocol Overview

It is impossible to accurately predict how long an individual’s concussion will last. There must be full recovery before a student athlete is allowed to resume participating in athletic activity. Connecticut law now requires that no athlete may resume participation until that athlete has received *written medical clearance from a licensed healthcare professional (physician, physician assistant, advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), athletic trainer) trained in the evaluation and management of concussions.*

Concussion Management Requirements:

1. No athlete shall return to participation in the athletic activity on the same day of a head injury or concussion.
2. If there is any loss of consciousness, vomiting or seizures, the athlete MUST be transported immediately to the hospital.
3. The athlete should not be left alone after the injury. Close observation and monitoring of an athlete MUST continue following a concussion or head injury to ensure that there is no worsening/escalation of symptoms.
4. Any athlete with signs or symptoms related to a concussion MUST be evaluated by a licensed healthcare professional (physician, physician assistant, advanced practice registered nurse (APRN), athletic trainer) trained in the evaluation and management of concussions.
5. If the licensed healthcare professionals as identified above confirms a diagnosis of concussion or suspected concussion, the athlete is required to follow DPS Return to Play (RTP) protocol. If a concussion has been ruled out, the healthcare professional must state this in writing and the athlete is not required to be cleared through the RTP protocol.
5. Any athlete diagnosed with a concussion MUST obtain and submit an initial written clearance to the school nurse from one of the licensed health care professionals identified above, confirming a concussion diagnosis and directing the athlete into a well-defined RTP stepped protocol similar to the one outlined below. If at any time signs or symptoms return during the RTP progression, the athlete should cease activity. Paying close attention to an athlete's symptoms, and advancing only when the goal of each step has been met, greatly improves long term prognosis. While athletes can expect a minimum of 24 hours before advancing to the next step, clearance could take days if not weeks.
6. The RTP protocol can be initiated ONLY after the athlete is able to successfully navigate a complete academic school day

6. After the RTP protocol has been successfully administered (no longer exhibits any signs or symptoms or behaviors consistent with concussions), final written medical clearance is required by one of the licensed health care professionals identified above for the athlete to fully return to unrestricted participation in practices and competitions. The DPS Athletic Director and trainer manage the Medical Clearance RTP protocol including the final written clearance.

Medical Clearance RTP protocol (There should be at least 24 hours for each step of the progression)

Stage	Rehabilitation sets/Aim	Functional exercise at each step of rehabilitation/Activity	Goal of each step
0	It is recommended that an initial period of 24 – 48 hours of both relative physical rest and cognitive rest is achieved before beginning the RTP progression identified in Stages one through six below (McCrary, P. et al., 2017). If at any time signs or symptoms should worsen during the RTP progression, the athlete should stop activity that day. If the symptoms are gone the next day, the athlete may resume the RTP progression at the last step completed in which no symptoms were present. If symptoms persist, the athlete should be referred to a healthcare professional who is an expert in the management of concussions.		
1	Symptom-limited activity	Daily activities that do not provoke symptoms	Gradual reintroduction of work/school activities
2	Light aerobic exercise	Walking or stationary cycling at slow to medium pace; No resistance training	Increase heart rate
3	Sport-specific exercise. No contact	jogging, brief running or skating drills; No head impact activities	Add movement
4	Non-contact training drills	Harder trainer drills (e.g., ball/puck/baton passing drills); May start progressive resistance training	Exercise, coordination and increased thinking/concentration
5	Full contact practice	Following medical clearance, participate in normal training activities	Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff
6	Return to sport	Normal game play	Return to full athletic participation