

AMHERST ATHLETICS AND CONCUSSIONS: All Amherst athletes must take a NFHS concussion course prior to their first day of practice/tryout. This concussion course can be found on FamilyID when you register for athletics.

Concussion and Return to Play Protocol

The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Administration (MIAA) Board of Directors adopted the following policy concerning concussions that applies to all member schools: “Any athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.”

Any head injury can be a serious life threatening condition. It is important that the athlete and caregiver pay careful attention to the following symptoms:

- Headache
- Pressure in head
 - Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
 - Confusion
- Concentration or memory problems
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness

If any of these symptoms occur during any phase of the recovery process, whether in school, practice, or at home, the coach, trainer, nurse, or health care provider needs to be notified if so they will be reverted back to the first step of the return to play process. Athletes who have not fully recovered from an initial concussion are significantly vulnerable for recurrent, cumulative, and even catastrophic consequences from a second concussion injury. Such difficulties are prevented if the athlete is allowed time to recover from the concussion and return to play decisions are carefully made. No athlete should return to sport or other high-risk activities when symptoms of concussion are present and recovery is ongoing. Don't Hide It! It is better to miss a few games than a whole season. The following procedures will be followed in the event an athlete receives a head injury:

- The athlete will be removed from the contest or practice.
- The athletic trainer will conduct a Standardized Assessment of Concussion.

- If the athletic trainer is not available, the coach will notify the caregiver and recommend follow-up with the athlete's health care provider.
- The athletic trainer/coach will notify the caregiver and the Director of Athletics.
- The Director of Athletics will notify the school nurse.
- The school nurse will contact the athlete's teachers and guidance counselor.

Gradual Return to Play Protocol

Any athlete exhibiting signs and/or symptoms of a concussion will follow the Gradual Return to Play Protocol.

Return to play will occur only after the following steps have been completed, in the order listed below:

- Caregiver reads and signs Concussion Information and the Gradual Return to Play Protocol.
- Athletic trainer verifies that the Physical Post Injury Tests were administered and the athlete was asymptomatic. Athlete must finish Physical Post Injury Tests, even if their health care provider has cleared the athlete.
 - Athlete may not participate in practice or play until written clearance by an appropriate health care professional: physician (MD, DO), physician's assistant (PA), or nurse practitioner (NP) AND with completion of the Physical Post Injury Tests.
- Completed signature form returned to athletic trainer.
- Athlete reads and signs the Concussion Information.
 - Athletic trainer notifies the coach and gives copies of completed form to the Director of Athletics and the school nurse.

The athlete will be required to complete the return to play protocol, administered by a certified athletic trainer. Only one test is administered per day. The next step will be administered only when the previous test is passed. The return to play will take a minimum of five days.

- Step 1:** Full return to academics (with no accommodations)
- Step 2:** Light aerobic activity and light stretching
- Step 3:** Moderate aerobic activity, stretching, and light balancing activities
- Step 4:** Moderate to High aerobic activity – maybe non-contact practice
- Step 5:** Full practice only no games

*If symptoms arise at any point athlete will return to Step 1