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# 'Tis the season for...

*By Russ Coash, PA-C*

Fall is just around the corner - you know what that means – it's finally time for FOOTBALL! Late summer is a time of great anticipation for us Huskers, this year especially as we all want to believe that this year will be the start of something great with Scott Frost.

Like many Nebraskans, football is my favorite sport to watch. Unfortunately, football is the sport most often associated with concussions. In terms of numbers of athletes injured; more youth, high school and college aged athletes will have a sports related concussion playing or practicing football than any other sport. Helmet technology has improved over the years, rules are changing and players are being taught safer techniques for hitting; all to try and lower the risk for concussions. However, football players are and will continue to get concussions.

The good news is that most players who suffer a concussion can recover completely and return to their usual activities within a relatively short period of time. However, just like any injury, a concussion must be treated properly to heal completely.

For an athlete to recover fully from a concussion, it must first be recognized that they might have a concussion. Unfortunately, there is not one symptom that everyone who has a concussion will tell you. Concussions can occur from seemingly minor impacts. It can be very difficult to determine on the sidelines if a player has had a concussion. Therefore, all kids suspected of having a concussion deserve to be evaluated by a medical professional trained in the recognition and treatment of concussions.

The Nebraska Concussion Awareness Act enacted in 2012 states that: "an athlete presenting with signs or symptoms of a concussion thereby being "reasonably suspected" of having sustained a concussion (a) must be removed from participation, and (b) may not return to participation until evaluated by appropriate licensed health care professional". The law also states that a student athlete must then have written and signed clearance to return to play.

The most important action to take in the initial management of concussions is to remove the kid from danger. A subsequent injury to a brain that has a concussion can be catastrophic. Brain rest is another component of the initial treatment of a concussion. The concussed individual and their families are instructed to limit physical and mental stresses. After a period of rest, the athlete will go through a series of prescribed mental and physical stresses to help rehabilitate the brain and make sure the athlete is safe to return to play. This is a process that must be directed by a medical professional trained in the management of concussions. Kids differ greatly in how they rehabilitate from a brain injury. Each athlete must be reevaluated thoughtfully as they progress through a structured return to learning and return to play program.

While football is the sport most commonly associated with concussions – kids can sustain a concussion in all other sports. Even in a "non-contact" sport, like cross country, an athlete can sustain a concussion – for example; from a fall or a collision with another runner. Concussions can occur in any sport as well as through non-sports related injuries. Therefore we must always be alert to this possibility and recognize when a concussion may have occurred.



# Second Impact Syndrome

“Second Impact Syndrome” can happen when someone is subjected to a second brain injury while still healing from a concussion. Second Impact Syndrome describes a series of processes that occur in which the brain rapidly swells. It is thought that this occurs because the brain has lost its ability to regulate blood flow to itself. Once this process has started it is very difficult to stop – many kids have died, others have suffered years of debilitating problems.

Thankfully, Second Impact Syndrome is rare. This condition has been difficult to study and we don’t know just why this happens to some kids and not others. We can’t say for sure which kid is at most risk. There is not enough evidence to say just what symptoms indicate a kid is at risk and it does not appear that either the first or second impact has to be severe for a kid to suffer from Second Impact

Syndrome. We must, therefore, consider EVERY kid suspected as having a concussion, as being at risk for Second Impact Syndrome.

While Second Impact Syndrome is very rare, other complications of a concussion are fairly common. Some kids may experience headaches for several days or weeks after a concussion, others will suffer what is referred to as “Post-Concussion Syndrome”. This describes a set of symptoms such as dizziness, fatigue and mental foginess that can persist for months after a concussion. Studies have suggested that someone is more likely to suffer from Post-Concussion Syndrome if they have had a recent concussion when they suffer a second one. It is our hope that by identifying those with a concussion early and by managing them correctly we can prevent kids from suffering from these complications of a concussion.

**My head just won't stop hurting!!**

After practice she just crashed and slept until 10 this morning

I don't feel so good

What' up with Sam that's the 3<sup>rd</sup> assignment he's blown – lets pull him out

I can't concentrate in class

I'm good ... just a little ding, .. just give me a second I'll be fine ... really I'm good - really

All he wanted to do after practice was sit in his room, he had the lights off and headphones on but I know his mp3 was out of power

Is it onside block or am I supposed to trap, or maybe pull ..... what was the call?????????

Dude – you were supposed to run a post not a fly – you would have been wide open

He looked a little clumsy going back to the huddle – the next play he lined up offside

She's been really moody since after her volleyball game last week, not really been herself, she did take her time getting up off the court after colliding with Amy in the 3<sup>rd</sup> set. Said she was fine.

I just haven't felt right since I got tackled on the kickoff return

Coach thought something was wrong so she pulled me out

Her eyes just don't look right