

Hempstead Independent School District

Head Injury Assessment, Prevention, Management, and Return to Play Guidelines

The following procedures and guidelines on assessment, prevention, and management of head injuries, as well as return to play guidelines has been developed in accordance with Texas' "Natasha's Law" and the goals of Hempstead ISD athletics to ensure the well-being of each student athlete. The risk of repeated concussions and second impact syndrome is also a concerning factor. These two problems can have long lasting, and even terminal effects, on the athlete.

Continuing to play with the signs and symptoms of a concussion leaves athletes especially vulnerable to greater injury. There is an increased risk of significant damage from another concussion before completely recovering from the first one. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences. It is well known that adolescent or teenage athletes will often under report symptoms of injuries. (Including concussions) As a result, education of administrators, coaches, parents, and students is the key for student athlete's safety.

Purpose

The Hempstead ISD Athletic Department recognizes that concussions pose a significant health risk for student athletes. Therefore, the Athletics Department has implemented policies and procedures to deal with the assessment, prevention, management, and return to play guidelines for student athletes who have sustained a head injury. In addition the Athletics Department also recognizes the importance of baseline testing on student athletes who participate in sports which are recognized as contact or collision and/or who have a history of concussions upon entering athletic participation in Hempstead ISD. Any baseline data along with physical exam, symptom scaling, follow up testing, and a gradual return to play protocol will all be used in conjunction with sound clinical judgment and on an individual basis to determine when it is safe for an athlete to return to competition.

Prevention

In an effort to reduce the number of head injuries in Hempstead ISD the district insists that safety comes first. The following procedures will be used as guidelines to assist in the prevention of head injuries.

- Teach and practice safe playing techniques

- Teach athletes the dangers of playing with a concussion
- Encourage athletes to follow the rules of play and to practice good sportsmanship at all times
- Make sure athletes wear the right protective equipment for their activity (such as helmets, padding, and mouth guards)
- All headgear must be NOCSAE certified
- Make sure the headgear fits the individual, and are secured properly to the individual
- For all sports that require headgear, a coach or appropriate designee should check headgear before use to make sure air bladders work and are appropriately filled.
- Padding should be checked to make sure they are in proper working condition.

Although all head injuries will not be prevented, Hempstead ISD is working proactively in order to reduce the number and severity of head injuries that do occur.

Reporting Head Injuries

It is important that the student athlete/parent report all head injuries received to the high school coach/middle school coach. This includes any head injury that occurs out of the school environment. It is important that any head injuries be reported before any physical activity.

Athletic Venue Evaluation

In all cases in which a head injury is suspected the athlete will be removed from athletic participation and an **initial assessment** will take place. The initial assessment will utilize the Hempstead ISD Concussion Management Card. Following the initial assessment further medical evaluation will be determined as per “Tasha’s Law”. The athlete will **NOT** be allowed further participation on the day of injury. Hempstead ISD Home Instructions for Head Injury will be provided, and parents/guardians will be contacted.

Health Care Professional Evaluation

Evaluation by Health Care Professionals should include a neurological and a functional test. A neurological test should include but is not limited to eye movements, pupil response, balance (static and dynamic), hearing, and vision. A functional test should include but is not limited to heel toe walking, jogging, and progressive functional activity.

School Evaluation

Any athlete that has sustained a head injury is required to report to the high school head coach of their respective sport or middle school coach of their respective sport daily. In all situations the school nurse will also be notified.

Treatment/ Rehabilitation

Hempstead ISD athletes who sustain a head injury will be instructed to rest, meaning total rest. Physical and cognitive rest, including but not limited to, NO athletic participation, NO recreational exercise, NO video games/TV, NO computer usage, and NO text messaging.

Academically, if deemed necessary teachers will be notified and academic accommodations will be made.

Follow-up Evaluation

Hempstead ISD athletes who have sustained a head injury will be required to follow the return to play guidelines. Athletes will be required to check in with their athletic coach/middle school coach daily until cleared by a medical professional. Once cleared by a medical professional, athletes will be required to complete a progressive return to activity protocol, and parents and athletes will be required to sign a school concussion release. Even if cleared by a physician, athletes may not pass the progressive return to play protocol.

Head Injury Data

Within seven days of a head injury occurring or being cleared, all information will be reported to the Concussion Oversight Team. A standardized reporting form will be utilized for reporting purposes.

- High School Coaches will report to the Concussion Oversight Team Chairperson
- Middle School Coaches will report to the Concussion Oversight Team Chairperson

Liability Provisions

The student and the student's parent or guardian or another person with legal authority to make medical decisions for the student understands this policy does not:

- Waive any immunity from liability of a school district or open-enrollment charter school or of district or charter school officers or employees
- Create any liability for a cause of action against a school district or open-enrollment charter school or against district or charter school officers or employees
- Waive any immunity from liability under Section 74.151, Civil Practice and Remedies Code
- Create any liability for a member of a concussion oversight team arising from the injury or death of a student participating in an interscholastic athletics practice of competition, based only on service on the concussion oversight team.