



Sports Neuropsychology Society

Returning to School and Sport after the Concussion With the Help of a Sports Neuropsychologist

What Parents and Athletes Need to Know!

Helping the student-athlete return to school and sport requires the skill of a licensed healthcare professional who understands how the brain functions and how it recovers from concussion. The sports neuropsychologist is a licensed, doctoral level brain-behavior specialist with in-depth training in sports concussion testing, diagnosis, treatment, and management.

Each person, and each concussion, is unique, so there is no “normal” time line for returning the athlete to school and sport. The sports neuropsychologist can tailor the treatment to the specific mental and physical needs of the athlete, especially when symptoms are prolonged. The sports neuropsychologist is also the premier expert in neurocognitive baseline and concussion testing and can best interpret test results to help guide the treatment and to help create a plan to return to school and to sport.

The latest research tells us that the majority of youth with concussions recover within several weeks to one month. However, it is important that an athlete with a concussion does not return too soon to sport, which may result in re-injury and medical risk. On the other hand, some athletes may be kept away too long from normal activities, resulting in frustration, anxiety, and loss of athletic strength. The sports neuropsychologist understands the importance of balancing safety and return to activities, as well as how other health factors may be affecting the athlete’s recovery.

Parents and athletes need to know...

1. If you suspect a concussion, remove the athlete from play and have her or him examined by a licensed healthcare professional with special skill in concussion, such as a sports neuropsychologist.
2. Reasonable rest in the early days (usually 1 to 3 days) immediately following the concussion is important for promoting recovery time. Reasonable rest does NOT, however, mean “cocoon” rest, such as sitting in a dark room, or bed rest. In the early period of recovery, simply reduce physical activity and school work to a level that does not increase symptoms, such as headaches, but do not return to sport.
3. After the early period, gradually introduce more cognitive or “thinking” activities as tolerated. Return to school gradually too, with modifications in school work, which the sports neuropsychologist can recommend based on your child’s symptoms.
4. As symptoms improve, the athlete should complete physical exertional testing and begin a supervised, carefully paced program of light exercise.
5. The athlete should return to sport only after they are cleared both physically AND cognitively by a qualified healthcare professional.
6. Be aware of the concussion laws and regulations in your state or jurisdiction.

For more information or to find a
sports neuropsychologist near you:
www.sportsneuropsychologysociety.com

