

# TEAM AMERICA FC CONCUSSION POLICY

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Team America FC is committed to protecting our athletes from concussion-related problems. While there is no clear evidence that any equipment or treatment can prevent or reduce the occurrence of concussions in soccer, our concussion policy is designed to protect our athletes from unnecessary risks associated with their behavior and actions after a concussion is suspected.

- All TAFC coaches, assistant coaches, and team managers must have successfully completed the Center for Disease Control (CDC) Head's Up concussion training before they can begin organized practices ([http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online\\_training.html](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/HeadsUp/online_training.html)). For existing coaches, assistant coaches, and team managers, they must complete this training before September 1st, 2014.
- A copy of the coach's CDC Head's Up concussion training completion certificate must be turned in to the TAFC office.
- All coaches will follow the advice and guidelines the CDC has defined for concussion awareness, removal from practices and games, diagnosis, and return-to-play, including:
  - Starting August 15th, 2014, coaches, referees, or officials must remove an athlete exhibiting the signs and symptoms of a concussion during practice or a game. These include: appears dazed or stunned; is confused about assignment or position; forgets plays or assignments; is unsure of game, score or opponent; moves clumsily; answers questions slowly; loses consciousness (even briefly); shows behavior or personality changes (i.e. irritability, sadness, nervousness, feeling more emotional); can't recall events before or after hit or fall; complains of headache or "pressure" in head (how badly it hurts does not matter); nausea or vomiting; balance problems or dizziness; double or blurry vision; sensitivity to light and/or noise; feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy; concentration or memory problems; confusion; does not "feel right"; trouble falling asleep; or sleeping more or less than usual.
  - The athlete cannot return to play on the same day that he or she is removed.
  - The athlete is not permitted to return to play until they have been assessed and receive written clearance by a physician (MD or DO) or by any other licensed and qualified health care provider.
- No TAFC coach, assistant coach, or manager is authorized to make a medical diagnosis. Parents must seek professional medical advice when either they or their coaches have any concerns regarding potential concussions.
- TAFC encourages all parents to familiarize themselves with the information the CDC provides on their website (<http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion/HeadsUp/index.html>).
- All TAFC coaches must follow the Graduated Return to Play Process when reintroducing an athlete to competition after a concussion. Parents should discuss this process with their physician during the diagnosis of, and recovery from, a concussion.

# Graduated Return to Play Process

Rehabilitation Stage	Functional Exercise	Objective of Each Stage
Stage 1	No Activity	Physical / Cognitive Rest & Recovery
Stage 2	Light Aerobic Exercise	Running Drills, NO Contact, Increase heart rate
Stage 3	Sport-Specific Exercise	Running Drills, NO Contact, Add Movement
Stage 4	Non-Contact Drills	Complex Drills, Resistance Training Exercise, Coordination, Cognitive Load/IMPACT
Stage 5	Full Training Activity	Following Clearance, Normal Training Activities Restore Confidence, Assess Functional Skills by Coaches
Stage 6	Return to Play	Normal Game Play

*\*From Table 1 McCrory et al., Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport 3rd International Conference on Concussion in Sport, Zurich, November 2008*

A safe return to play is the ultimate goal, regardless of age and level of play.

When an athlete has been evaluated by an athletic trainer and/or a physician for a concussion, the following graduated functional return to play process should be followed. The return to play progression will not begin until the athlete is completely symptom free. Each stage is a minimum 24 hour period; therefore the return to play progression will be a minimum of 4-5 days from start to finish, but can take months.

If the athlete experiences any symptoms, at any point during a rehabilitation stage, the progression will stop immediately and the cycle will resume at the previous asymptomatic rehabilitation stage after 24 hours of rest. This will take patience on the part of the athlete, coach, and parents, but is essential for a safe return. If symptoms continue to occur, the athlete will be referred back to the physician for a follow up evaluation.

The treatment, management, and return to play determinations will be individualized to each athlete and dependent on circumstances of each specific case and injury. IMPACT testing is recommended in the return to play determination, treatment and evaluation of concussions.

Team America FC personnel are not qualified to make return-to-play decisions, those must be made by your doctor. Team America FC requires that the parents or guardian of a player who has suffered from a concussion must notify their TAFC coach when their medical professional has cleared the player to return to soccer. Only after that can the player begin the Graduated Return to Play Process.

It is both the parent and coach's responsibility to ensure that the player progresses through the recommended return-to-play process before resuming unrestricted activity.

TAFC encourages all parents to print this policy and information page and discuss it with their health care professional when they are seeking advice and treatment for concussions.

Additional information: <http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion/>

# Frequently Asked Questions:

## 1. What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a fall or a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. Health care professionals may describe a concussion as a “mild” brain injury because concussions are usually not life-threatening. Even so, their effects can be serious. A concussion can occur with or without a loss of consciousness, and proper management is essential to the immediate safety and long-term future of the injured individual. A subsequent concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first – usually within a short period of time (hours, days, weeks, or even months) – can dramatically slow recovery and increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. Repeat concussion can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.

## 2. What are the signs and symptoms of a concussion?

**Signs observed by teammates, coaches, parents/guardians may include:**

- Appears dazed or stunned;
- Is confused about assignments and positions;
- Forgets instructions and answers questions slowly or inaccurately;
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent;
- Loss of balance/coordination and moves clumsily;
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes;
- Cannot recall events prior to hit or fall; and
- Cannot recall events after hit or fall.

**Symptoms reported by the athlete may include one or more of the following:**

- Headache or “pressure” in head;
- Nausea/vomiting;
- Balance problems or dizziness;
- Sensitivity to light or sound/noise;
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, groggy, or foggy;
- Difficulty with concentration, short-term memory and/or confusion;
- Double vision or changes in vision;
- Irritability; and
- Just not “feeling right” or is “feeling down”.

*\* adapted from the CDC*

## 3. How can you help your child prevent a concussion?

Every sport is different, but there are steps your child can take to protect themselves from concussion:

- Ensure that they follow their coach’s rules for safety and the rules or laws of the sport
- Encourage them to practice good sportsmanship at all times
- Make sure they properly wear the right protective equipment that is required for their sport

However, there is no clear evidence that any headgear reduces the occurrence or severity of concussions. Playing safely is the best way to reduce the risk of a concussion.

#### **4. What should you do if you think your child has a concussion?**

- Seek medical attention right away. A licensed health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports. Until you have professional medical advice, do not let your child participate in practice, games, or any physical activity.
- Keep your child out of play. Concussions take time to heal. Don't let your child return to play until a licensed health care professional gives clearance to return. Children, who return to play too soon, while the brain is still healing, are at a greater risk of having a subsequent concussion. Second or later concussions can be very serious. This can lead to prolonged recovery, or even to severe brain swelling (second impact syndrome) with devastating and even fatal consequences.
- Tell your child's coach about any recent concussions. School personnel should also be notified if your child had a recent concussion. Your child's coach may not know about a concussion your child received in another sport or activity unless you tell the coach.
- Refer to the Graduated Return to Play Process to familiarize yourself with the process used to determine when it is safe for your child to gradually return to full activity.
- Be patient. Recovery from a concussion can take a long time. You should never rush the recovery from a concussion.

#### **5. My child took a blow to the head yesterday, but was fine last night. However, they don't seem right today. Could that be related?**

It is common for concussions to take up to 3 days to fully manifest. If your child is displaying any symptoms of a concussion, seek medical advice immediately. Delayed onset of symptoms does not signify that it might be less serious.

Team America FC is not intending to provide specific medical advice or diagnosis with this policy or webpage. If you believe you or your child may have a concussion, please seek immediate professional medical advice.