Rittenhouse PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATES

Tips for Coaches

SAFE PLAY, SMART TECHNIQUE, A CONFIDENT RETURN

A concussion can happen in any sport, from a hit to the head *or* a hard fall or collision that jolts the body. Athletes don't need to be knocked out, and symptoms may show up hours later. **When in doubt, sit them out.**

1 Make reporting the norm

- Talk about concussions at the start of the season.
- Expect symptoms to be reported to you, the athletic trainer, or parents.
- Praise speaking up, even for a teammate. Drop "shake it off."

2 Teach safe technique

- Coach age-appropriate tackling, heading, and landing.
- Under age 13, focus on agility, coordination, and conditioning.
- Fix risky habits in practice before they show up in games.

3 Play by the rules

- No hits to the head or leading with the head or helmet.
- Call out reckless contact, even when it isn't penalized.
- Limit full-contact reps in practice, and add contact back gradually after time off.

4 Have an action plan

- Remove an athlete from play right away if you suspect a concussion.
- A healthcare provider guides a step-by-step return to play before clearing them for full contact and competition.
- Share the plan with assistant coaches.

5 Support the athlete's mindset

- Reassure athletes worried about losing their spot.
- Keep them involved (meetings, film, sidelines) when approved.
- Ask how they're doing, not just when they'll be back.

6 Don't rush the comeback

- Return to play is a gradual process and part of recovery. Follow the provider's plan.
- "I feel fine" isn't clearance, even late in the season.
- Watch for fear of contact; rebuild confidence slowly.

What the comeback looks like

At least 24 hours per stage • Progress in accordance with treating provider's guidelines

LOWER INTENSITY → FULL PARTICIPATION

STAGE 1	STAGE 2	STAGE 3	STAGE 4	STAGE 5	STAGE 6
Limited Activity	**Light Aerobic**	**Moderate**	**Non-Contact**	**Contact Practice**	**Return to Play**
Walking, stretching	Light jog, bike, swim	Running, agility	Sprints, plyometrics	Drills, scrimmage	Full competition

NO CONTACT / COLLISION

REQUIRES CLEARANCE

Rittenhouse Psychiatric Associates Concussion Program
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Questions? Call the concussion team
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