

POST-CONCUSSION RETURN-TO-LEARN POLICY

When student-athletes at Wartburg College sustain a concussion from any cause, it is important to realize that their ability to learn and subsequently their academic progress may be hampered. For this reason, it is imperative that proper steps be taken in order to notify the Academic Department and arrange for proper management of athletes that have sustained concussion. At present, when an athlete sustains a concussion from any cause, they are held out of all physical activity until their symptoms resolve. They are evaluated by the athletic training staff daily and then cleared only by the team physician (or designee) when they are ready to resume participation in their sport and training. During this time of physical rest, it is important for the athlete to have some degree of cognitive rest in order to allow for enhanced recovery of symptoms. While it would be impossible to completely remove the athlete from all of their academic responsibilities, some adjustments in demand and academic requirements should be made. Other forms of mental stimulation such as TV watching, loud noises, non-academic computer use, video games and texting should be limited or eliminated during this recover time allowing as much academic work as possible.

The following guidelines should be used in regards to managing the cognitive rest needed for the student-athlete to recover; taking into account that each athlete and each concussion are different so it would be impossible to set out strict recommendations. The management of the return to learn program will be in full compliance with the ADA.

- When an athlete sustains a concussion, they should be removed from all academic responsibilities for the remainder of that day.
- If the student-athlete cannot tolerate light cognitive activity, they should remain at their residence to rest.
- Once light cognitive activity is tolerated, the athlete may return to the classroom as tolerated. If at any point the student-athlete experiences return of symptoms or scores on clinical measures decline, the team physician should be notified and the student-athletes cognitive activity should be reassessed.
- The extent of academic adjustments needed should be decided by a multidisciplinary team that may include but not be limited to the team physician, athletic trainer, academic representative, academic counselor, course instructors, coach, college administrator, and psychologists and/or neuropsychologists. The level of involvement by each member of this multi-disciplinary team should be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Modification of class schedule and academic accommodations may be necessary for up to two weeks and will be coordinated by Sally Malcolm, Administrative Assistant to VP for Academic Affairs, Dean of Faculty.
- Prompt re-evaluation by a team physician and members of the multi-disciplinary team, if appropriate, will be done on any student athlete whose symptoms last longer than two weeks or who has worsening of concussive symptoms with academic challenges.

Most concussive symptoms typically resolve within two weeks, however, there are occasions when symptom can persist for weeks to months. When an athlete has persistent symptoms, adjustments in curriculum and testing may prove more challenging. It is important to verify that the athlete is truly having continuation of concussive symptoms as often there are other conditions that may present with the same symptomatology such as post-concussive syndrome, attention deficit disorder, sleep dysfunction, migraines and other headache disorders, anxiety and or depression, and simply assuming

these symptoms are the result of the concussion and just waiting them out may prove counter-productive. When a student-athlete has not recovered in an anticipated time frame, the student athlete may need a change in their schedule and academic requirements. Special arrangements may be required for extended absences, tests, term papers or other projects. In these situations, the athlete may need the assistance of the Pathways Center. An athlete presenting with prolonged symptoms must be re-evaluated to check for other co-morbid conditions and then a detailed long-term academic plan must be instituted. As treatment continues and the athlete recovers, then a gradual return to normal academic function may ensue. Every effort will be made by the Wartburg College and the Academic Department to ensure that an athlete that has sustained a concussion will be treated in such a manner as to ensure his safe return to sport and maintain their academic progress.

