



In May 2009 the Washington State Legislature passed the Zackery Lystedt Law so that youth athletes are pulled from practice or game if there is a suspected head injury. The WIAA has the following statement under concussion management **“a youth athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury in a practice or game shall be removed from competition at that time. A youth athlete who has been removed from play may not return to play until the athlete is evaluated by a licensed health care provider trained in the evaluation and management of concussion and receives written clearance to return to play from that health care provider.”**

As licensed health care providers, Athletic Trainers are one of the health care providers that are trained in the evaluation and management of a concussion. Athletic Trainers are well-versed in all levels of concussion management. Most athletes with a concussion will recover or see significant improvement in symptoms in the first 7-10 days. Below are the guidelines that have been published by numerous organizations regarding the Return to Play and Return to Learn aspect of concussion management. These are also the guidelines that Olympic Sports and Spine follows for all athletes and patients.

Return to Learn

PHASE 1

- No school - complete cognitive test
- Rest at home, avoid screen time
- Limit cognitive stress, no homework

PHASE 2

- School work at home
- Trial of short assignments (15-30 minutes at a time)
- Avoid increase in symptoms, no tests or quizzes

PHASE 3

- Partial school attendance (with accommodations)
- Core classes, breaks in quiet area, no tests/quizzes

PHASE 4

- Full school attendance (with accommodations)
- Goal to attend full day with limited breaks
- Limit tests and quizzes to one per day

PHASE 5

- Full school attendance (without accommodations)
- Slowly reincorporate testing and quizzes
- Introduction of Return to Play for Athletics

PHASE 6

- Full return to school and athletics

Return to Play

STEP 1

- Athlete is clear of symptoms and has returned to normal daily activities for at least 24-48 hours

STEP 2

- Stress test
- 20-30 minutes of light aerobic activity to increase HR
- Maintain less than 70% max HR

STEP 3

- Sport-specific conditioning
- 20-30 minutes of intense activity (may include biking, running, sprinting, sport conditioning, agility drills, weightlifting)

STEP 4

- Light practice
- Non-contact practice drills at full speed (wearing appropriate sport equipment)

STEP 5

- Full practice / Return to full contact practice

STEP 6

- Competition / Return to full competition

* Every student-athlete will not necessarily need to go through each phase in their Return to Learn program. There will be individual variability, so flexibility is important. In some cases of mild symptoms, student athletes may not require a Return to Learn plan.

* Each step requires 24 hours before advancing to the next step. However, depending on overall recovery, may include increase days at each stage or, if symptoms return during a step, returning to previous step when athlete is once again symptom free.