

Attention All Winona Hockey Families,

The Winona Youth Hockey Association is now entering the second season of our comprehensive concussion management program !!! The inaugural season was a great success. The *ImPACT* cognitive testing went smoother than expected. Unfortunately, 13 players sustained concussions last season. But, all of these players were managed thru our concussion management program, and all safely returned to playing hockey !!!

I am also excited to mention that the WAYHA concussion program was featured on Minnesota Public Radio during the Minnesota High School Hockey championships last spring. In addition, an editorial on the program was published in *Lets Play Hockey* magazine's July edition !!!

The program works as follows:

- If your player is 10 years old or over, he/she will undergo baseline cognitive testing using the ImPACT test program. ImPACT is a computer based cognitive test program that measure impulsivity and concentration. It is *not* an intelligence test. In September, before the season starts, your child will take a "baseline" ImPACT test. This will be done in a computer lab at Winona State University, and we will test the players by team/age group. The testing will be provided to all hockey players by Winona Health *free of charge*. This is the exact same ImPACT test that is used by the NHL, MLB, US Olympic Team, Cirque du Soleil and several other professional sports organizations.
- All WAYHA parents will be invited to attend an education meeting about concussions and the concussion management program. This will also be done by age group.
- WAYHA coaches and referees will be provided formal education on concussion recognition and management, provided by Winona Health. Coaches will also undergo an online training course provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC training is actually *required* under Minnesota State Law, and must be completed by all coaches.
- If your player gets a concussion during a game, or complains of symptoms of a concussion after the game, then the player can be seen by an ImPACT trained doctor and/or certified athletic trainer from the Winona Sports Safety Committee at Winona Health. Specific instructions on how to get in to see the doctors and trainers, and begin the post-concussion management process will be provided to all parents, and those instructions will also be posted on the WAYHA website.
- The player can then undergo repeat ImPACT testing (usually at least 48-72 hours after the event) which will help determine when the concussion is "clearing", and this will help determine when it is safe to return to play. The doctors will also decide if the player needs any imaging tests, such as a CT scan or MRI. If your child has more concerning symptoms and needs to be referred to a specialist, such as a pediatric neurologist, this will be arranged.
- Once deemed safe, the WAYHA coaches will have a "return-to-play plan" for the player to follow. This will involve gradual progression in activity until the player is back to full speed hockey with no return of concussion symptoms.
- If your child is not 10 years old, the ImPACT test is not used, but the player is still able to be managed by the Winona Youth Sports Safety Committee program, just without the ImPACT test. It has been determined that in children under 10 the ImPACT test itself is too confusing, and the data is not helpful.
- If you choose to use a doctor other than those involved in the Winona Youth Sports Safety committee, then that is perfectly fine. You will just need to have a doctor's note submitted to the WAYHA Board of Directors before your child can start skating again, and your player will still need to go thru a gradual

return to play plan. *A note from the doctor does not mean that your child is cleared to play in a hockey game, the not means your player can begin the graduated return-to-play process.*

*****Please realize that there is a lot of misunderstanding in medical community, even by good doctors, on how to treat sports concussions. Also understand that a "negative" or "normal" CT scan or MRI does not mean it is safe to return to play. CT scans and MRI's can rule out a bleed in the brain and sometimes have an important role in managing acute head injuries. But they have no role whatsoever in determining when your child can safely return to playing hockey. This is a very common and very dangerous misconception. ******

The main treatment of concussions is REST. This means both mental and physical rest. Children who suffer concussions are often removed from sports, but not from other activities that can be very harmful. For example, video games, cartoons, movies, math tests, stressful social situations, loud noises and music can all be *very harmful* to the brain after a concussion. In addition to limiting physical and mental activity, your child may also require special adjustments be made to his/her school schedule or schoolwork.

If children return to play too soon after a concussion, it could be detrimental to them. In the short term, if a child is put back in a game after a concussion, severe and even fatal brain swelling can occur. After a concussion, the brain is very susceptible to repeat injury. Even a seemingly minor blow to the head after an initial concussion can cause rapid brain swelling, even death. In the long term, if the brain is not allowed time to adequately heal after a concussion, children can suffer prolonged headaches, difficulty concentrating, anger, confusion, behavioral changes, depression, and impulse control issues. It is critically important to allow the brain time to heal after the initial concussion to avoid post-concussion syndrome. We would certainly hate to see someone's future jeopardized over a youth hockey game, and it is our job to make sure our players are safe.

Sincerely,

WAYHA Board of Directors