

September 21, 2010

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As you may be aware, Governor Deval L. Patrick recently signed a law requiring all public schools and other schools that are member of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA) to participate in a mandatory Sports Head Injury and Concussion Awareness Program beginning with the 2010-2011 school year. The law also directs the School Department to develop regulations to implement the policies specified in the law including educating athletes and their parents about concussions; the documentation of student athlete's past head injuries; requirements for taking a student-athlete out of play or practice and certification for "return to play". At Amesbury High School, we already require documentation about past head injuries and have a protocol in place for student athletes who suffer head injuries; therefore, it is the educational component that we must implement.

The law requires that athletes and their parents inform their coaches about prior head injuries at the beginning of the season. If a student athlete becomes unconscious during a game or practice, the law now mandates taking the student out of play or practice and requires written certification from a licensed medical professional for "return to play". Within our sports packets, we have a Pre-Participation Athletic Screening page where several health-related questions are asked. In particular, there is a question about head injuries. When answering that question, please be sure to be thorough and accurate as prior history is essential for us to have when dealing with injuries. Additionally, a statement acknowledging that you have been informed about the concussion course and where to get resources will be added to the general school rules page of the sports packet.

Concussions are very serious. Prior to the start of each season, all coaches at Amesbury High School will have successfully completed a concussion course that includes the signs and symptoms of concussion, how to respond to a suspected concussion, what you need to do to help an athlete when s/he is cleared to safely return to play, and what you can do to prevent sports-related head injuries. **The law requires that parents or legal guardians of children who participate in any co-curricular athletic activity complete a Sports Head Injury and Concussions Awareness course.** In addition, it recommends that student athletes themselves participate in such a course or receive printed materials with information about concussions. **Beginning with the upcoming winter season, one parent/guardian per student athlete will have to submit a certificate from one of the two recommended on-line courses listed below**

prior to their student athlete being permitted to participate in athletics at Amesbury High School. If you or your child does not have access to a computer to complete this course, please contact either Steve Bastien or Sarah Centric to make arrangements to take the course at Amesbury High School.

Additional information about concussions, as well as the courses themselves, can be located and printed at either of the following websites:

<http://nfhslearn.com/electiveDetail.aspx?courseID=15000>

www.cdc.gov/Concussion

A link to these websites can also be found on our school website under “Athletics”.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Together, we can work to prevent, report and properly treat concussions. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 978-388-4800.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth McAndrews
Dean of Students/Activities
Amesbury High School

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why are we starting this process after the start of the fall season?

A: The information from the Department of Public Health was disseminated for the first time to schools on August 27, 2010, after the start of fall sports.

Q: What has Amesbury High School Athletic Department done with head injuries in the past?

A: Even prior to this concussion law, Amesbury Athletics has employed a certified trainer, routinely solicited information about prior health history including head injuries, utilized a concussion assessment tool, notified parents of injured players both verbally and in writing and required a signed note from a medical doctor prior to a student athlete being allowed to return to action.

Q: What has Amesbury High School done so far in response to the new law?

A: In anticipation of the new concussion law, all fall coaches, both paid and volunteer, completed the NFHS (National Federation of High Schools) Head Injury and Concussion Awareness course. This process will continue for both the winter and spring seasons.

Q: As a parent, what do I have to do?

A: The law requires that a parent/guardian completes a Sports Head Injury and Concussion Awareness Course and submit completed certificate with the upcoming season's paperwork. In addition, parents and student athletes should review and discuss the fact sheets about concussions found on either one of the websites mentioned above. If your son or daughter sustains a head injury, be vigilant about looking for signs of concussion and encourage your child to honestly report how they are feeling.

Q: What does my son or daughter have to do?

A: It is strongly recommended that s/he take the Sports Head Injury and Concussion Awareness Course. At the least, a discussion at home with a parent or guardian around the signs and symptoms of head injuries is required.