

# Return to Play Patterns among U.S. High School Athletes Who Have Sustained a Concussion

*The National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance Study has collected sports injury data from a nationally representative sample of 100 U.S. high schools since its inception during the 2005-06 school year. Previous published findings from this surveillance study indicated that sports-related concussions accounted for almost 10 percent of all injuries among student athletes. In a new study by researchers at the Center for Injury Research and Policy of The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, led by Dr. Dawn Comstock, data from this surveillance study were analyzed to determine whether concussed student athletes are complying with recommended return-to-play guidelines.*

An unacceptable number of adolescent athletes are returning to play before fully recovering from concussion. These athletes are at risk of negative outcomes including serious lifelong physical and mental health problems or even death. Given the potentially catastrophic consequences of returning to play before being fully recovered following concussion, there is a need to improve education on appropriate return-to-play guidelines and to find ways to ensure these guidelines are being applied. Sports medicine professionals, parents, coaches and sports administrators must work together to ensure proper recovery following concussion.

***For more information on traumatic brain injuries including concussions or for a free (Heads Up!) tool kit on concussions visit [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/TBI.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/TBI.htm).***

## Research Findings

- ✓ Under American Academy of Neurology return-to-play guidelines, at least 4 in 10 concussed high school athletes (40.5 percent) returned to play too soon.
- ✓ Under Prague return-to-play guidelines, at least 1 in 6 concussed high school athletes (15.0 percent) returned to play too soon.
- ✓ In gender-comparable sports, males were more likely than females to be noncompliant with Prague return-to-play guidelines (21.9 percent and 11.8 percent, respectively).
- ✓ During the 2007-2008 season alone, 1 in 6 football players who sustained a concussion and lost consciousness (15.8 percent) returned to play the same day.

*For more information, please contact the Center for Injury Research and Policy in The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital at (614) 722-2400, [www.injurycenter.org](http://www.injurycenter.org) or [CIRP.info@nationwidechildrens.org](mailto:CIRP.info@nationwidechildrens.org).*

*The Center for Injury Research and Policy (CIRP) works globally to reduce injury-related pediatric death and disabilities. With innovative research as its core, CIRP works to continually improve the scientific understanding of the epidemiology, biomechanics, prevention, acute treatment and rehabilitation of injuries. CIRP serves as a pioneer by translating cutting edge injury research into education, advocacy and advances in clinical care. In recognition of CIRP's valuable research, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently named the Center for Injury Research and Policy as one of the 13 centers in the United States to be designated as an Injury Control Research Center.*

## Center for Injury Research and Policy

The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital

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