
HEAD ISSUES (NFHS)

The concern related to concussions is in all sports. The sport of football continues to make headlines, but with the protocols for concussion management and implementation of state laws the past 12 years, the NFHS and its member state associations believe the sport of football at the high school level is as safe as it has been since the first rules were written in 1932.

The NFHS and its member state associations utilize the services of two national injury reporting and research organizations in an effort to reduce the risk of injury for high school student-athletes. The National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR) seeks to enhance the understanding of sports-related catastrophic injuries, illnesses and fatalities through active surveillance and research, with a focus on head/neck injuries, commotio cordis injuries, fatal/near-fatal cardiac conditions and fatal/near-fatal heat-related conditions. NCCSIR is committed to providing timely and useful information to the NFHS, its member state associations and high schools.

The development of an online portal in 2015 enables state high school associations and their member schools to report the basic details surrounding catastrophic sports events (www.sportinjuryreport.org). Ongoing, active surveillance to monitor the incidence of catastrophic injuries, illnesses and fatalities is critical to identify areas for prevention and further study. Continued and improved efforts for detailed information and record-gathering is also critical to prevention.

[The National High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance System \(High School RIO\)](#) is a sports-injury surveillance system that has captured data from a large national sample of high schools annually since 2005-06. Since that time, High School RIO has captured information on nearly 80,000 injuries sustained during more than 40 million athlete exposures. The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee and individual NFHS rules committees use data from High School RIO to better understand which athletes are at risk of injury during different types of sports activities. As a result, evidence-based decisions can be made to keep high school athletes as safe as possible. High School RIO data is used to monitor injury rates over time, to identify new concerns and to evaluate the effectiveness of rules changes.

Data from High School RIO during the 2015-16 season indicated that attempts by the NFHS and its member state associations to reduce the risk of head trauma and concussions in football have proven effective. Surveys from 2015-16 indicated that the rate of concussions during practice dropped below 5.0 per 1,000 athletic exposures to 4.77 for the first time since 2010-11. Also, a 2015 study by the University of Wisconsin, Madison, revealed that the rate of concussions was reduced by more than 50 percent from the previous two seasons. These studies came on the heels of the 2014 NFHS Concussion Summit Task Force, which recommended that state associations adopt plans for limiting contact during football practices.

With state laws and rules administration in place to govern removing individuals from games who have concussion-like symptoms, to the reduction of contact in practice, to the continued education efforts, the focus on risk minimization has never been higher. However, as the new season looms, it is important to make sure that no concussion goes unreported.

More than 3 million individuals have taken the NFHS' free course "Concussion in Sport," and this is a great time to offer this wonderful resource again to schools across the country. This course is available at <https://nfhslearn.com/courses/61064/concussion-in-sports>. In addition, a related course specifically for high school students – [Concussion for Students](#) is available.

In addition, since 2010, the [Suggested Guidelines for Management of Concussion in Sports](#) statement has been published in all NFHS rules books.

Also, the CDC, which teamed with the NFHS in the Concussion in Sport online course, offers the ["HEADS UP to School Sports"](#).