Return to Play – Ohio’s Youth Concussion Law

Summa Health Sports Medicine helps local schools and youth sports organizations implement the state of Ohio’s youth concussion law. The law, one of the most stringent in the nation, took effect in 2013 and covers all athletes age 19 and younger participating in organized sports.

A concussion is a complex process affecting the brain which is induced by traumatic biochemical forces. It can be caused by a direct blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow elsewhere on the body which transmits force to the head.

"It’s more than just the collision," says Scott Barbone, M.Ed., A.T., manager of Summa Health Sports Medicine. "It’s the fact that the head is jarred or twisted and the brain gets bounced around."

During the past 20 years, studies and research into concussions has greatly increased, according to Ben Burkam, MD, a Summa Health sports medicine physician. And he says the medical community has only scratched the surface.

“There is still a lot about concussions that we don’t know,” Dr. Burkam points out. “Research going on today will change the way we take care of concussions for years to come.”

Summa Health Sports Medicine takes a multi-prong approach to educating parents, educators, coaches and referees about the law.

Scholastic Coaches
Summa athletic trainers teach a Pupil Activity Permit class, which all high school coaches are required to take. The class includes a discussion about concussions. Now, athletic trainers will use the class to make sure coaches understand the new law and their responsibilities.

Teachers and Counselors
Summa sports medicine specialists offer an educational program for teachers and counselors so they can spot the signs and symptoms of a concussion, as well as to understand how a concussion can effect a student academically.

Youth Sports
Ohio’s law goes farther than most states because it impacts youth sports. The law states that youth sports coaches must at least undergo free online training through the Ohio Department of Health. Summa would like to meet with advisers, coaches and parents of as many youth athletic programs as possible.

Parents
Most schools hold preseason meetings with parents. Summa hopes to talk about the law and how Summa treats concussions with as many of these groups as possible.

Physicians
Summa has taken the lead in working with Akron General Medical Center and Akron Children’s Hospital to develop an educational program for primary care, emergency and other physicians.

The concussion law requires:
- Mandatory education on the signs and symptoms of a concussion for parents, coaches and referees.
- Athletes exhibiting signs, symptoms or behaviors of a concussion must be immediately removed from play and cannot return that day.
- Athletes cannot return to play without clearance from a doctor of medicine (M.D.), doctor of osteopathic medicine (D.O.) or other healthcare provider as outlined by the law.
- For more information on Ohio’s concussion law visit the Ohio Department of Health’s website at healthyohioprogram.org/concussion

To schedule a same day/next day appointment with a Summa sports medicine physician, call 330.835.5533.