

Valley Hospital offers concussion testing - NorthJersey.com

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To assist parents and coaches in protecting young athletes from the serious head injuries that can result from returning to play too soon after suffering a concussion, The Valley Hospital Sports Institute offers the ImPACT Concussion Management Test. ImPACT (Immediate Post Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) is an innovative computerized evaluation system that assesses the effects and severity of a concussion and helps determine when it is safe for an athlete to return to contact sports following a concussion.

ImPACT testing is suitable for athletes ages 12 and older. It is a 20-30 minute neurocognitive test battery that has been scientifically validated to measure the effects of sports-related concussion. Typically, in the preseason each athlete is given a baseline test. And, when a concussion is suspected during the season, a follow-up test is administered to see if the results have changed from the baseline. This comparison helps to diagnose and manage the concussion. Follow-up tests can be administered over days or weeks so clinicians can continue to track the athlete's recovery from the injury.

The Sports Institute recently enhanced its Concussion Management Program with the addition of the Biodex Biosway Balance testing unit. The test takes about 5 minutes and provides a psycho-motor assessment of concussion injuries. Athletes should be tested in the preseason to gather baseline information that can be used for comparison in the event of a concussion to assess the extent of the injury and the athlete's readiness to return to activity.

Since most high schools in the area have the testing in place already, the Sports Institute is providing this service primarily for the recreation and town-sponsored youth sports teams for athletes ages 12 and older.

The next scheduled baseline testing sessions will take place on Thursday, March 21. Two sessions will be held at 5:30 and 6:30 p.m. at Valley's Kraft Center, located at 15 Essex Road in Paramus. The tests will be conducted in the 3rd Floor Computer Lab.

Pre-Registration is required, as space is limited. The fee is \$25. Call 201-447-8133 for more information and to register.

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are most commonly caused by a bump or blow to the head, but, can also be caused by a sudden deceleration or acceleration of the head. In either scenario, the brain, suspended inside the skull and surrounded by fluid, continues to travel with momentum until it "bangs" up against the skull – causing a brain-bruising injury – or concussion. What may seem to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after the injury, or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away. Common symptoms include: headache, dizziness, feeling foggy, nausea, fatigue and confusion. Common signs include memory loss, a loss of balance and coordination, and changes in personality. Concussion severity varies widely, and the number of signs and symptoms vary also – serious injuries may show few symptoms.

Although less common, bleeding in the brain can occur with some head injuries. Loss of consciousness, mental status deterioration and worsening symptoms raise the concern for a bleeding injury. An athlete does not need to lose consciousness (black out) to suffer a concussion. In fact, less than 10 percent of concussed athletes lose consciousness.

An athlete who suffers a concussion can be at risk for a condition known as Second Impact Syndrome if he or

she returns to sports before full recovery. Second impact syndrome is a life-threatening condition in which a second concussion occurs before a first concussion has properly healed, causing rapid and severe brain swelling. Second impact syndrome can result from even a very mild concussion that occurs days or weeks after the initial concussion.

“Second Impact Syndrome can be prevented,” said Donald Tomaszewski, director of The Valley Hospital Sports Institute. “Don’t allow an athlete to return to sports after a concussion until their symptoms have completely resolved and they have been cleared by a medical professional experienced in treating concussions.”

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