



Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD

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Contact: William Reinhard, 410-767-0486

MARYLAND MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN CONCUSSION SAFETY

RECOMMENDS CERTAIN PRACTICE LIMITATIONS

BALTIMORE, MD (August 13, 2013)— Maryland continues to add protections for student athletes, with a focus on improved concussion safety.

New recommendations from the Maryland State Department of Education, prompted by regulations adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education this spring, limit the number of contact practices in collision sports. MSDE also recommends improved instruction by coaches in contact sports and defines interscholastic sports by types: collision, contact, limited contact, and non-contact.

Football and boy's lacrosse have been defined as collision sports, and the recommendations target those sports in particular. Coaches in both sports should place special emphasis on proper techniques for such activities as tackling or body checking.

In football, no live hitting is allowed until the sixth day of practice. During the season, teams should limit live hitting drills and live game simulations to two practices per week. In lacrosse, after the first play date, schools should be limited to a maximum of one full-contact practice per day. In addition, there would be no live checking the day before a game.

“Student safety is our paramount concern, and our desire is to keep our athletes on the field and in the classroom,” said State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery. “These recommendations follow those put in place by leading college and university athletic organizations, and we believe they will work well in Maryland schools.”

The recommendations were developed by the MSDE Concussion Implementation Advisory Panel, a group of leading medical professionals and athletic officials from systems and organizations across the State. The panel was following up on a directive made by the State Board on May 21.

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(ATTACHED: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MSDE'S CONCUSSION IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY PANEL)

**Identification of Collision, Contact and Non Contact Sports and
Recommended Concussion Injury Mitigation and
Limitations of Contact Exposure**

Sport Classification

Collision	Contact	Limited Contact	Non Contact
<i>Consistent with the purpose of the game athletes hit or collide with each other or inanimate objects including the ground with great force.</i>	<i>Athletes routinely make contact with each other or inanimate objects but usually with less force than in collision sports.</i>	<i>Contact with other athletes or inanimate objects are less frequent or inadvertent.</i>	<i>Any contact is inadvertent and not expected.</i>
Football	Basketball	Baseball	Badminton
Ice Hockey	Field Hockey	Field Events: High Jump Pole Vault	Bowling
Boys' Lacrosse	Girls' Lacrosse	Softball	Field Events: Discus Shot Put Triple Jump Long Jump
	Soccer	Volleyball	Golf
	Wrestling		Swimming
			Track & Cross Country
			Tennis

Recommendations for Concussion Injury Mitigation and Reduction of Contact Exposure for Collision Sports

By definition, those activities designated as Collision Sports may incur a high rate of concussion for participating athletes. Research indicates that in addition to proper instruction and drills a reduction of exposure to live contact should contribute to a lower rate of concussion injury.

Football

Rational:

Research has demonstrated the rate of concussion injury in football is the highest in interscholastic sports. The National High School Sports Related Injury Surveillance Study 2011-12 found that head/face concussions accounted for 23.6 % of total injuries. Furthermore, the data details 95% of these injuries occur while blocking, being blocked, tackling or being tackled. Research data by the Ivy League and the NCAA have reported similar findings in the rate on concussions. Currently numerous national and state organizations, as well as three local school systems in the state of Maryland have implemented reductions to contact exposure during practice sessions.

Recommendation:

1. Coaches should place special emphasis during practice sessions on proper techniques for blocking and tackling.
2. The following football practice restrictions are recommended to strike a balance between teaching proper technique and skills while limiting the number of live contact exposures.

Pre-season:

- No live hitting until day 6 of practice (Heat Acclimatization Rules)
- Live hitting (full speed, go to ground contact) periods limited to full padded practice days.

In-season (Beginning the Monday prior to the first play date):

- A team may conduct full padded practice days, but may only participate in live hitting drills and live game simulations with live hitting no more than two practice days per week.
- Live hitting drills or live game simulations with live hitting shall not be conducted the day prior to a game.

Definition:

- Live Hitting is defined as football drills or live game simulations where full game speed blocking and tackling of players to the ground occurs.
- Full Padded is defined as players dressed and equipped in accordance with NFHS Football Rule 1-5 (equipment guidelines).

Boys' Lacrosse

Rational:

Research has demonstrated the rate of concussion injury in boys' lacrosse is among the highest in interscholastic sports. The National High School Sports Related Injury Surveillance Study 2011-12 found that head/face concussions accounted for 34.3 of reported injuries. NCAA data collected from 1988 to 2003 found the concussion injury rate in men's lacrosse to be 2nd only to football. Research by the Ivy League has reported similar corroborative data.

Recommendation:

1. Coaches should place special emphasis during practice sessions on proper techniques for body checking that avoids contact with or to the head.
2. The following boy's lacrosse practice restrictions are recommended to strike a balance between teaching proper technique and skills while limiting the number of live contact exposures.
 - After the 1st play date, schools are limited to a maximum of one full contact practice per day.
 - No live body checking (stick checking permissible) allowed in practice the day prior to a game.

Definition:

- Body Checking is defined as contact typically made with a shoulder or chest to an opponent with both hands of the player applying the check remaining in contact with the crosse.

Recommendations for Concussion Injury Mitigation in Contact Sports

While activities classified as Contact Sports are not specifically structured to provide for intentional physical contact between participants like Collision Sports, the incidence of game/sport related contact between players and/or equipment cannot be totally avoided. Providing athletes with proper instruction and drills emphasizing proper techniques should contribute to a lower rate of concussion injury.

Rational:

Research has demonstrated that the rate of concussion in contact sports indicates the need for special emphasis on specific sports related skills. The National High School Sports Related Injury Surveillance Study 2011-12 indicated skill related activities that led to the highest incidents of head/face concussion injury. The instruction and drill of proper techniques in specific sport segments is essential in order to minimize potential for injury.

Sport Recommendations:

Basketball

- Coaches will place special emphasis on proper techniques on play involving body-to-body contact specifically rebounding, picking, screening and shot blockage.

Field Hockey

- Coaches will place special emphasis on proper techniques on dual challenges specifically where the potential for body-to-body or body-to-stick contact can occur.

Girl's Lacrosse

- Coaches will place special emphasis on proper techniques specifically for player positioning and stick checking.

Soccer

- Coaches will place special emphasis during practice sessions specifically on proper individual heading techniques, heading duals and aerial challenges.

Wrestling

- Coaches will place special emphasis specifically on proper takedown techniques and aspects of competitions involving contact to the head.

References

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