

CONCUSSION & BASELINE TESTING

Concussions are one of the most common sports-related injuries and athletic trainers are trained to recognize and treat athletes with this injury. At Mars, we take concussion management seriously and work with some of the best clinicians and resources in the area to ensure a safe return to activity for all of our student-athletes.

BASELINE TESTING:

Immediately prior to each sports season, Mars Area School District athletic trainers conduct ImPACT Baseline Concussion Testing for any student-athlete in Grades 7, 9 or 11 or any athlete who has not previously taken a baseline test through Mars Area School District.

ImPACT (Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) is widely used and the most scientifically validated computerized concussion evaluation system; and, is a tool used to determine if a concussion is present as well as if an athlete is ready to safely return from an injury.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are Frequently Asked Questions regarding Mars Area School District's ImPACT Baseline Concussion Testing program:

1.) Who takes the ImPACT baseline test?

Mars athletes (grades 7-12) participating in any interscholastic, school-sponsored sport will be required to take a baseline test prior to the start of their sport season. The test will be administered by the Mars certified athletic trainers at no charge.

2.) How long does the ImPACT test take?

The ImPACT test takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. The test begins with a demographics section that asks general information as well as a brief medical history. It is then followed by a current signs/symptoms section, in which the athlete "rates" their current symptoms. The actual testing portion takes about 20 minutes.

3.) What should I do once my athlete has sustained a concussion?

If the athlete receives a concussion, the athletic trainer will help you devise a treatment plan for your son/daughter. Most of the time, the athlete will set an appointment with their medical provider (pediatrician, primary care provider, etc) and/or with a neuropsychologist with a specialization in concussion care. The athletic trainer will work with the athlete's treatment plan until they have reached a return-to-play status. It is important to remember that every brain is affected by a concussion in a different way so the treatment plan will be individualized for that athlete's specific needs and everyone's injury timeline will be different.

4.) What do I need to have for my athlete to be cleared to return-to-play? Once the athlete has been determined to have a concussion, that athlete ultimately needs to be cleared for return-to-play by a physician (MD or DO). Return-to-play notes from any other health care provider will not be accepted. This is in accordance with Pennsylvania State Law. The ImPACT testing protocol provides the necessary objective data to aid in making the return to play in a timely and efficient manner.

5.) What if my athlete takes this test numerous times—will he/she repeat the same test?

The test battery consists of a near infinite number of alternate forms. This feature was built into the program to minimize the "practice effects" that have limited the usefulness of more traditional neurocognitive tests.

6.) What if my athlete is color blind?

Color blindness is accounted within the software of the test. If the athlete is color blind, it will only affect one section of the test, the color match test. However, at the beginning of this portion of the test, it asks the athlete to identify certain colors. If the athlete cannot do this, it will be accounted for and noted in the results section and should not affect their overall scores.

7.) What if my athlete has a learning disability?

They can still take the test and the results will be specific to them. There is a specific section in the demographics/medical history portion of the test that asks to note learning disabilities. Athletes are encouraged to be honest in this portion of the test so that scores can be accounted for. All ImPACT test results/information are confidential.

MEDICAL RESOURCES:

Your athlete has gotten hit in the head and is having some concussion-related symptoms, now what? The Mars athletic trainers can assist you with determining if your student-athlete requires further medical evaluation and treatment with a physician or neuropsychologist.

The athletic trainers can also assist you in getting in to be seen quickly and efficiently with some of the best concussion providers in the area.

While you care for your athlete at home, here is a resource for you to reference with some home-care instructions: [Concussion Home Care Instructions](#)

Want to know more? Check out: [UPMC Concussion Program](#)

RETURN TO PLAY & CLEARANCES:

Once your athlete has fully met the criteria to return to athletics from a concussion, it is **REQUIRED** that your athlete provide the athletic trainers with a written note signed by their treating physician on their practice letterhead. Athletes will not be released to return to activity without a note. To read more about this process, visit: [Return-to-Play from Injury & Clearances](#)

SAFETY IN YOUTH SPORTS ACT:

Pennsylvania enacted a law in 2011 for the safety of athletes in regard to concussion management. To read more, visit: [PA Safety in Youth Sport Act](#)

Want to learn more about concussion management? Visit & read the National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement here: [NATA Concussion Management Position Statement](#)