



Harris County Hospital District

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MEDIA RELEASE

Get a Heads Up on Concussions for Football Season

HOUSTON (Aug. 30, 2006) – Are you ready for some football? Many area high school athletes are, but as football season kicks off there are likely to be many injuries – including concussions.

“Concussions can happen to any athlete in any sport,” said Dr. Julie Jones, medical director of school-based clinics at the Harris County Hospital District. “But they can be especially dangerous, because athletes often don’t report their symptoms.”

HCHD experts want to remind coaches and parents to know the signs of a possible concussion and be observant of athletes. More than 300,000 sports-related concussions occur each year in the United States.

A concussion is a brain injury that is caused by a bump or sudden jolt to the head. The sudden blow shakes the brain inside the skull, which temporarily prevents the brain from working normally.

Signs of concussion include changing levels of consciousness, balance problems, memory and concentration difficulties, headaches, ringing in the ears, nausea and the sensation of being in a “fog.”

Concussions can be classified as mild, level one, moderate, level two, or severe, level three.

If a player reports any symptoms, they should be checked out completely by a physician or team trainer. They should be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for the athlete to return to sports.

“If an athlete has three significant head injuries in a season, they should not play for the rest of the season,” Jones said. “It’s ‘three strikes and you’re out.’ After three concussions the athlete has an increased risk for further injury.”

Though injuries are a part of sports, there are ways to prevent concussions. Athletes should wear well-fitted helmets and practice good safe sports techniques, such as not tackling opponents helmet-first, known as spearing.

“The most important rule is to follow up with a physician after suffering any head injury,” Jones said.

The Harris County Hospital District is the public health care system for the nation’s third most populous county. It provides more than 1.1 million health care visits each year to uninsured, underinsured and medically needy residents of Harris County. The Hospital District operates Ben Taub General Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, Quentin Mease Community Hospital, 12 community health centers, a dental center, eight school-based clinics, 13 homeless shelter clinics and four mobile health units.

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