



# Evaluation & return-to-play protocols for head injuries

Effective Jan. 1, 2016

*Distributed: Dec. 18, 2015*

Per U.S. Soccer's new concussion initiatives, **evaluation and return-to-play protocols have been introduced for players who have suffered head injuries**. This initiative, as well as modified substitution rules and the requirement of healthcare professionals at tournaments with 64 or more teams at U-11 and older age groups, are to be implemented on **Jan. 1, 2016**.

## EVALUATION & RETURN-TO-PLAY PROTOCOLS:

U.S. Soccer recommends and US Club Soccer requires the immediate removal of any player who sustains a significant blow to the head or body, who complains about or who is showing symptoms consistent with having suffered a concussion.

**For events with an on-site healthcare professional**, this professional will perform applicable testing – SCAT3 or Child SCAT3 and modified BESS – to evaluate players on the field/sideline. Any player suspected of suffering a concussion will not be allowed to return to play until he/she is cleared by the healthcare professional. No coach, parent/guardian or player may overrule the healthcare professional.

- Healthcare professionals are considered licensed professionals, such as an athletic trainer certified (ATC) or physician (MD/DO), with skills in emergency care, sports medicine injuries and experience related to concussion evaluation and management.

If a coach attempts to allow a player who had been removed from a game for concussion assessment and who has not been cleared to return to play by the on-site healthcare professional, the referee should:

1. Immediately stop play;
2. Direct the player to leave the field;
3. Instruct the coach to select a substitute;
4. Issue a warning to the coach.
  - a. If a coach persists, the referee is entitled to take necessary disciplinary measures against the coach.
  - b. The referee should include this behavior in his/her referee report to US Club Soccer.

**For events without an on-site healthcare professional**, no coach can permit a player who has been removed from a game for concussion suspicion/assessment to return to play until he/she is cleared by a healthcare professional. Referee responses and actions outlined above should be taken against any coach who persists in trying to re-insert the player into the game without proper clearance by a healthcare professional.



## Modified substitution rules Effective Jan. 1, 2016

*Distributed: Dec. 18, 2015*

Per U.S. Soccer's new concussion initiatives, **substitution rules have been modified regarding head injuries**. This initiative, as well as new protocols regarding return to play and the requirement of healthcare professionals at tournaments with 64 or more teams at U-11 and older age groups, are to be implemented on **Jan. 1, 2016**.

These substitution rules apply to competitions without unlimited substitutions.

### **MODIFIED SUBSTITUTION RULES:**

Any player suspected of suffering a head injury may be substituted for evaluation without the substitution counting against the team's total number of allowed substitutions during the game. Please reference the complementing page concerning evaluation and return-to-play protocols for head injuries.

If the player is evaluated by a healthcare professional (definition below) or certified athletic trainer and determined to not have suffered a concussion, the player may re-enter the game at any stoppage of play. This player must replace the original substitute, and this medical substitution will not count as an official substitution, pursuant to the substitution limits of the given competition. Additionally, the temporary substituted player may re-enter the game as a regular substitute.

- Healthcare professionals are considered licensed professionals, such as an athletic trainer certified (ATC) or physician (MD/DO), with skills in emergency care, sports medicine injuries and experience related to concussion evaluation and management.