

# **AMHERST MIDDLE SCHOOL ATHLETICS**



**Student-Athlete-Parent Handbook  
2025-2026**

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## Introduction

The information presented in this handbook has been compiled to inform you and your family of the policies, practices, and regulations that govern the athletic programs in the Amherst School District. By registering to participate in athletics at Amherst Middle School, you are agreeing to the requirements outlined in this handbook. Please keep this handbook as a reference.. If your questions or concerns are not answered within this booklet, please feel free to contact the administration.

## Mission and Vision of Amherst Athletics

**The Amherst Middle School Athletic program strives to be a program in which students excel in academics, sportsmanship, and athletics while building pride within the school and the community.**

The Amherst Middle school athletic department will work to inspire every student to explore their potential through athletics by providing opportunities, both within the middle school and through the recreation department, to discover their talents, ignite their passions, and build lifelong skills in a supportive and empowering environment.

## Core values- Have the Courage to CARE

**Compassion-** One of the goals of interscholastic athletics is learning lifetime values. Sportsmanship is one such value that makes these games an educational experience. An attitude of good sportsmanship, as demonstrated through positive behaviors should be upheld by all spectators, players and coaches.

**Accountability-** Student-athletes have a responsibility to be leaders amongst their peers. We are trusting them to be representatives of our larger community on very public scenes. They must demonstrate respect to their community, school, program, team, and self by behaving appropriately at all times. They are encouraged to excel in school and to make the right decisions in social settings and in peer groups.

**Respect-** For school community: Student-athletes are to follow the expectations set forth by the Amherst Cooperative School District, their school, the Amherst Athletic department, and the sport-specific program in which they participate. For teammates and coaches: In order to make our teams the best they can be, coaches and student-athletes must be fully committed. Family, faith, and academics should be the only priorities that come before interscholastic athletics. For opponents and officials: Student-athletes represent themselves, schools, families, and city. Unsportsmanlike behavior by students will have consequences.

**Effort-** Every task, drill, practice, game, and homework assignment should be done with pride and excellence at all times; understanding that each individual's level of excellence may be different. In order to make our teams the best they can be, coaches and student-athletes must be fully committed. Family, faith, and academics should be the only priorities that come before interscholastic athletics.

**\*\*If these core values are instilled in our student-athletes, all of our programs will be successful. Our students will leave our programs prepared for college, career, and all aspects of life after interscholastic athletics.\*\***

## Sports Offered

Tryouts for programs are open to all students providing they meet the standards of academic eligibility, school citizenship, completed permission and liability information and basic physical/health qualifications. Participation in the program, therefore, is a privilege earned by students who meet and maintain these standards.

### FALL:

Cross Country (AMS and MVVS grades 5-8)  
Field Hockey (grades 6-8)  
Soccer (grades 6-8)  
Girls Volleyball (grades 7-8)

### WINTER:

Basketball (AMS grades 7-8)  
Bowling\* (AMS and MVVS grades 6-8)  
Nordic Skiing\* (AMS grades 7-8)  
Spirit (AMS and MVVS grades 5-8)  
Wrestling (AMS grades 5-8)  
Club Volleyball\*( AMS and MVVS grades 5-8) \*Currently operates as a club

### SPRING:

Baseball (AMS and MVVS grades 6-8)  
Lacrosse(AMS grades 6-8)  
Outdoor Track(AMS and MVVS grades 5-8)  
Softball(AMS and MVVS grades 6-8)

## **Governing Bodies**

Amherst Middle School is a member of the **Tri-County League** (TCL) and adheres to the policies, rules, and regulations set by the TCL.

Additional policies, regulations, and rules are set by the Amherst School Board and the Amherst Middle School Administration.. The TCL Handbooks can also be viewed in the Amherst Athletic Department Office.

## **Proper Conduct and Sportsmanship**

Student-athletes represent themselves, their coaches, their teammates, their school, and the Amherst community. It is expected and encouraged that they maintain the highest level of scholastic achievement and citizenship, conducting themselves in a positive, courteous, and respectful manner at all times, whether in or out of season. Good sportsmanship will be displayed at all times with teammates, opponents, coaches, and officials. It is also expected that student-athletes will encourage this sportsmanship by spectators by leading by example.

Student-athletes will abide by all school, District, Athletic department, and team rules and expectations at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, proper dress and using appropriate language at all times.

**Smoking or use of any tobacco-like products (including e-cigarettes and vapors), consuming alcohol, and use of other drugs are prohibited. Violations of this will result in severe disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal from a team.**

**The Principal, Assistant Principal, Athletic Director, or Assistant Athletic Director reserves the right to remove a student from a team for poor academic performance, inappropriate behavior, and/or poor citizenship for any length of time. A student may be reinstated upon sufficient evidence of improvement as determined by the Principal and Athletic Director.**

## **Commitment**

### **Tryouts**

Participation in interscholastic athletics is a privilege. During the tryout period, the coach will provide an explanation of his/her expectations. It is the student's responsibility to demonstrate to the coach that he/she can meet those expectations for the duration of the season.

### **Daily Team Attendance**

It is expected that once a season begins, a student will be in attendance at every tryout, practice, competition, and team event. If a student is not going to be present at a practice or game, he/she must notify the coach. Students may be excused from team activities for illness, injury, academic, family or religious reasons with prior notification and approval whenever possible. Our coaches expect athletes to be present at all team-related activities.

Middle school athletics is a 5-day a week commitment. In the event that reschedules require a weekend event, we will adjust the rest of the week schedule accordingly.

### **Daily School Attendance**

#### **Absences**

- All students must be in attendance for at least half of the school day in order to participate in practice or an event that day.
- Exceptions, such as family emergencies, funerals, religious holidays, and scheduled appointments, must be cleared through the coach and/or Athletic Department in advance.
- If a student-athlete is dismissed by the School Nurse due to illness; he/she is ineligible to participate in athletics that day.
- Unique or extenuating circumstances not listed above may be excused at the discretion of the Athletic Director, Asst Athletic Director, Principal or Asst Principal.

**School/Family Vacations, Extended Absences (middle school athletics do not take place over school vacations. The following will apply at the high school level)**

Every student-athlete is expected to be present for all team practices and contests. Student-athletes who anticipate extended absences during the season—due to vacations, family commitments, or other scheduling conflicts—should meet with both the Athletic Director and the Head Coach **prior to the start of the season** to discuss the situation and any potential impact on team participation. The Athletic Department realizes that certain circumstances will arise, and ask families to understand that extended absences from team commitments may result in a role change within the team as a natural consequence.

Student-athletes who participate in **school-sponsored trips during their season** will not be penalized. However, time away from practices and games may affect their readiness to return to competition or their previous role on the team.

If a student-athlete takes a **non-school-sponsored vacation**, they will be suspended from the same number of contests they miss while away. Additional consequences for missed practices may be applied at the coach's discretion. Any issues or problems arising from this policy should be addressed to the Athletic Director.

At the Middle School level, we understand that families may plan extended vacations during the school year. If your student-athlete will miss practices or games due to a vacation, we ask that you please contact the Athletics Office as early as possible. Our goal is to support all of our student-athletes and their families. If your child will be away, we will do our best to work with the coach and family to find a solution—as long as doing so does not take away time, opportunities, or spots from other students who are regularly attending practices and games.

**Non-School Competition**

It is expected that once a student athlete agrees to participate on a school team, that team shall take priority over other teams' schedules. In the event of a conflict with another team, the student and parent are encouraged to connect with the coach and athletic director at least a week in advance to discuss conflicts and make a plan, if possible.

**Playing Time**

There are many benefits to be gained by participation in athletics at the middle school level. Student-athletes learn the values associated with discipline, performing under stress, teamwork, sacrifice, commitment, effort, accountability, citizenship, sportsmanship, confidence, leadership, organizational skills, participating within the rules, physical well-being, and striving towards excellence. Although there are many measures of success in the minds of each participant, perhaps the most emotional is "playing time" during contests. If a student has questions as to his/her "playing time" he/she is encouraged to discuss it with the coach. In the Amherst Athletic Department, being a member of a team does not guarantee an equitable amount of "playing time." However, there are guidelines for this important topic.

**Middle School Teams**

The goal of middle school athletics is to provide students with the opportunity to participate and grow as students, people, and athletes. Success is measured by the number of participants, the quality of the experience, and growth. Championships are not a measure of success at the middle school level. Absent disciplinary reasons, the playing time for regular season contests will approach equality. For post-season games, coaches will make every effort to balance the competitive nature of the contest with each member having meaningful playing time.

**Sub-Varsity Teams-High School**

At the sub-varsity level (junior varsity, freshman), members of the coaching staff will make a strong effort to play all team members for as much time as is practical. There are many factors that govern an individual's playing time, but overall, students must be "positive contributing team members", attending practices, showing effort, having a positive attitude, and exhibiting a full commitment to the school team. Another factor that must always be considered is athletic skill. If these factors are present at the sub-varsity levels, students may expect to enjoy their share of "playing time" but it may not be every event and it will most likely not be equal.

## Disqualification/Ejection from an Event

Any player who is disqualified before, during or after any sanctioned event shall not participate in any scheduled interscholastic athletic events until sitting out the next **two** scheduled events at the level at which the suspension occurred. This includes TCL tournament contests, invitational events, or regular season contests. The TCL imposeS a one game suspension, Amherst imposes a second.

Any player involved in a fight shall receive a **four** game suspension for the first offense.

A second disqualification will lead to a disqualification in that sport for the balance of the sports season.

Any coach who is disqualified before, during or after a game at the sub-varsity or varsity level shall not participate in the next **four** scheduled interscholastic athletic events, including TCL tournament contests, invitational events, or regular season contests.

**An ejection or disqualification from an event is a subjective decision by the officials and cannot be protested or appealed. The above suspensions are in place regardless of the reason for the ejection/disqualification.**

## End of Season Expectations

As a middle school athletic program, our goal is to create positive, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate experiences for all student-athletes. Our end-of-season events will reflect those values. Coaches will mark the end of seasons with a fun, low-stakes practice or team meeting that celebrates team connection and growth. All school issued equipment and uniforms should be returned at this event.

While the practice of recognizing 8th graders at the final home game of the season is well-intended, it often creates exclusion, inconsistency across teams, and confusion about the purpose of middle school sports. We will continue to celebrate all athletes equally and together at the season's final team event.

## School Athletic Equipment

Students have an obligation and responsibility for all equipment and uniforms issued to them. Proper care, retention, and return of all equipment and uniform parts is a requirement. Students failing to turn in all issued equipment, uniforms, or returning equipment damaged through misuse, are responsible to meet the current replacement cost for such equipment or uniforms. Payment is required at the time of the loss, prior to the next season of athletic involvement, or graduation, whichever comes first. In the event that the equipment or uniform is found and/or returned after payment, a refund will be made.

Students will not be issued an athletic uniform if there are any fees owed to the school. Once the fees are paid, the student will receive his/her uniform. A student will not receive a uniform for their current season if another season's uniform has not been returned. Students are to wear the school issued uniform at all interscholastic events.

## Locker Rooms and Facilities

### **Student Lockers**

Students are expected to lock all personal items and team equipment in a locker at all times. Students should never give their locker combination to anyone else. Experience has shown that most losses are due to lockers being left open or unlocked. On road trips, when lockers are not available, it is highly recommended that students leave valuables at home or give them to parents for safekeeping at the game site. Cash should never be carried or left at the school. **The Amherst Athletic Department is not responsible for items left unlocked and/or unattended.**

### **Building and Facility Access**

At the conclusion of each school day, student-athletes should bring all items that they need until the next school day to their practice area. For safety reasons students are not allowed access to other areas of the building after practice, games, or on non-school days. No students will be allowed access to any of our athletic facilities and/or equipment without proper supervision by a school staff member.

## Team Captains

Team captains are leaders of their team and should be ready to assume duties as outlined by their coach. They are expected to not only be aware of team rules and student responsibilities but also to help their teammates abide by them. Captains are expected to communicate with the coach and team in the event of any problems that may affect the team or its members. Captains may be

asked to meet with the Athletic Director during the school year to discuss the athletic program. Captains of teams may be relieved of their position for violation of team, department, school, District or state rules.

The coach determines how team captains are selected, if at all. Captains may be elected by the team or appointed by the coach. Captains may also be elected or appointed on a game-by-game basis. There is no requirement that teams must have captains nor that captains must be seniors

### **Communication**

While interscholastic athletics can provide some of the most rewarding and inspiring moments in students' lives, there can also be times when things may not go the way a parent or child wishes. If a conflict or issue arises during a season, it is imperative that it be addressed in a timely and appropriate manner so that the concern can be resolved promptly. Both parenting and coaching are extremely difficult jobs. Open communication and clear expectations will enable both groups to work together to provide a greater benefit to the student-athletes.

In many instances, a conversation between a **parent and the student-athlete** can resolve most questions or concerns. The student-athlete who is in attendance daily at practices and games should be able to address rules and roles of the program.

If this conversation does not resolve the problem or answer the question, the next step is for the **student-athlete and coach** to discuss the concern. Many times a misunderstanding can easily be resolved with this direct conversation.

If it is necessary for a **parent and coach** to meet to discuss a concern, the parent should contact the coach to schedule a meeting. Please do not attempt to confront a coach before, after, or during a practice or game. These can be emotional times for both the parent and the coach and would not promote a positive resolution. It should be understood that playing time, team strategy, play calling, and other student-athletes are not topics of discussion.

If none of the above avenues resolve the concern, then a meeting between the student, parent, coach, and Athletic Director will be scheduled.

**Contact the Athletic Director immediately at any time in the case of an emergency or a severe violation of safety or any rules or regulations.**

## **The Role of Parents in Middle School Sports**

(Adapted from a variety of sources)

Accept the demands and time commitment of school sports.

Do everything possible to have your child at every practice, team event, and competition.

Attend as many games as possible.

Support the entire team, not just your child.

Support the coach and let him/her be the single instructional voice before and during competition.

View the game with team and program goals in mind.

Accept the goals and roles of your child.

Model appropriate behavior before, during, and after the game. Be poised, confident, and calm.

Model and demand positive sportsmanship.

Cheer positively for your team only.

Relieve competitive pressure, do not increase it.

Accept the judgment of the officials and remain in control.

Do everything possible to make the athletic experience a positive one for the players, yourself, and those around you.

Be an encouragement, keep both victory and defeat in perspective.

Prior to each season there will be an informational "Meet the Coaches" evening. If their child is playing a sport in a given season, parents are required to attend the coaches night. Parent attendance is required at these meetings at least once in a school year BEFORE your student participates in athletics. If you cannot attend, please contact Athletic Director, Kelli Braley to make arrangements.

We would ask that parents help make the event a meaningful one for the athletes by showing respect for your team, the opposing team, the coaches, and the officials. Actions contrary to this will result in removal from the event, the grounds (whether home or away), and possibly future events in accordance with [SCSD policy KFA](#).

**Let the players play, the coaches coach, and the officials officiate.**

## **Registration Process/Eligibility**

Students wishing to participate in middle school interscholastic athletics must complete the following in order to be eligible. A student MAY NOT participate until all items are completed and verified.

### **1. Online registration through PowerSchool for each season of participation**

During this registration process, the parent/guardian will

- give permission for participation and provide emergency and medical information
- provide proof of health insurance.
- accept policies, procedures, and expectations as outlined in this handbook.

Opportunities will be provided for families to use a school computer if other internet access is not available.

### **2. Proof of medical examination clearing student for athletic participation**

This is required annually. It is required prior to participation at any level. For students new to middle school athletics, the physical must be dated on or after July 1 of the previous year.

For example: for the 2019-20 school year the physical must be dated on or after July 1, 2018 (last summer).

If necessary, please see the Athletic Department for information regarding locations of free or inexpensive athletic physicals.

### **3. Academic and Behavioral Eligibility - Being on a team is a privilege. Being a successful student is a priority.**

All middle school students will be considered academically and behaviorally eligible to participate in extracurricular activities at the start of each new school year. Athletics will work in partnership with classroom teachers and staff to ensure our students academically succeed. If an athlete is struggling academically or behaviorally, the athletic department will work with the student, family, coach support staff and teacher to create a plan to help get the student back on track. Part of that plan may include restriction on the level of participation until the academic and/or behavioral goals are met.

### **4. Athletic User Fee Payment**

Athletic user fees can be paid by cash or check in the amount of \$75 delivered to the athletic office in the middle school. Checks should be made payable to "Amherst Middle School" with the sport name on the memo line. There will be a \$35 charge for all checks returned due to insufficient funds. Students may try out prior to this fee being paid but students will not be issued a uniform until the fee is settled (ie: paid, free/reduced lunch or financial hardship granted, family cap, 3-season athlete verified, or payment plan agreed to). Dual sport athletes (two sports in one season) are required to only pay the higher of the two fees.

#### **Fee Waivers**

- Students who qualify for free or reduced meals through the Food Services Program are exempt from athletic fees and should indicate this at the time of registration.
- No family will be required to pay more than \$400 in any single school year.

A fee waiver or payment plan may be requested if there are extenuating circumstances regarding financial hardship. This request can be made to the Athletic Director.

#### **Refunds**

A 50% refund will be given if a student is injured in the first half of the season and will not be able to play due to medical conditions. The Athletic Office must be notified of such injuries

No refunds will be given if a student quits, is removed from the team for disciplinary or attendance reasons, or fails to meet the academic eligibility standards during the season.

In addition to Academic Eligibility stated above, there are other TriCounty League policies which have been summarized below in an attempt to highlight the most important rules and regulations. If the following information does not answer specific questions, or if there is a concern, please contact the Amherst Athletic Office.

### **Player Eligibility**

Upon entering fifth grade, a student is eligible for competition (whether or not he/she competes) for no more than four consecutive years.

### **Home-educated, non-public, charter school students**

A home educated student may represent a charter school, non-public or public school in the district where they reside. The home educated student must be living with the parents or legal guardians in the family residence.

A non-public and charter school student may represent the non-public or charter school they attend or the public school in the district where they reside. The non-public or charter school student must be living with the parents or legal guardians in the family residence.

### **School Representation**

A student is eligible to represent only one (1) school in any academic year, unless a legal change of residence has occurred.

## **Additional Amherst School District Guidelines and Policies**

### **Transportation To and From Contests**

The school provides bus transportation, or a suitable substitute, to and from most "away" contests. All team members are required to travel to these contests using the school provided transportation or with parental communication to the coach and athletics office. Only people listed for the student in the registration process will be allowed to transport if not taking school provided transportation.

In the event that there is no school provided transportation available, a separate transportation plan may be developed to ensure safe travel for our students to and from contests and activities.

### **Sportsmanship for Student-Athletes**

Amherst student-athletes must honor the responsibility that accompanies the privilege of representing their school by behaving with dignity and class on and off the field, mat, track or court. Student-athletes participating in all events are expected to treat opponents and officials with respect. There will be no tolerance for trash-talking, taunting, heckling, or baiting of opponents. Amherst student-athletes must appreciate and understand that they are perhaps the most visible representatives of their school.

**If any student in any sport willfully, flagrantly, or maliciously attempts to injure an opponent, he/she may be withheld from participation in athletics in the future.**

The NHIAA/TCL suspends any student from participation in a sport if ejected from athletic contests for unsportsmanlike behavior or what may be considered dangerous play. The Amherst School District imposes additional penalties as well. The District also reserves the right to impose the same penalties on spectators displaying poor sportsmanship at any contests, both home and away.

### **Physical Education**

All students are required to participate in their regularly scheduled physical education classes. Students being medically excused from physical education may not participate in their team practice or game for that day.

### **School Disciplinary Actions**

A student-athlete with a school disciplinary obligation is expected to fulfill the disciplinary obligation before reporting to an athletic practice and/or game. Students cannot expect, and should not request, disciplinary action to be postponed or canceled for any athletic reason. The Athletic Department reserves the right to remove a student from a team for excessive disciplinary problems and may reinstate the student upon sufficient evidence of improvement. It is expected that our athletes be model citizens both in and out of school; they should set an example for all students.

### **Hazing:** (See ASD Policy JICFA for full details)

Hazing activities are contrary to the Amherst School District's educational goals and objectives and will not be tolerated in our Schools. Hazing activities are prohibited at all times. Hazing is also a violation of the NH Criminal Code section 631:7, Student Hazing. The Criminal Code defines student hazing as "any act directed toward a student, or any coercion or intimidation of a student to act or to participate in or submit to any act when: (1) Such act is likely or would be perceived by a reasonable person as likely to cause physical or psychological injury

to any person; and (2) Such act is a condition of initiation into, admission into, continued membership in or association with any organization.”

Permission, consent, or assumption of the risk by an individual subjected to hazing is not a defense to the prohibitions contained in this Policy. No school board member, administrator, faculty member, school employee, or volunteer of the Amherst School District will encourage, commit, condone, or tolerate hazing activities. No student will plan, encourage, or engage in any hazing.

### **Behavioral Expectations for Student-Athletes**

Students who participate in Amherst Middle School extracurricular programs are expected to adhere to high standards of conduct. Any violation of the Student Behavior Standards policy resulting in a suspension will cause a student to be suspended from extracurricular activities. The following behaviors are examples of violations:

- Illegal use or possession of alcoholic beverages, regardless of where such use or possession occurs;
- Illegal use, manufacture, possession, having under control, sale, purchase, prescription, administering, transportation, dispensation, or compounding of any controlled drug, controlled drug analog, or any preparation containing a controlled drug, as any of the above terms are defined in N. H. RSA 318-B:1, regardless of where such behavior occurs;
- A finding of guilt, delinquency, probable cause, or indictment for violation of a criminal statute in any jurisdiction.
- Student Hazing as defined in N.H. RSA 631:7(d), and in POPPS 3244.2, regardless of where such student hazing occurs;
- Illegal gambling, assaultive or threatening conduct, stealing, vandalism, and destruction of property – if any of these behaviors occurs while on school grounds, or otherwise while participating or attending a scholastic or interscholastic event;
- Misconduct, including but not limited to assault or on advisor, coach, judge, official, participant, opponent or spectator; inappropriate behavior and/or obscene language; cheating; directing threats or obscene gestures at an advisor, coach, judge, official participant, opponent or spectator – if any of these behaviors occur while participating in or attending a scholastic interscholastic event.

Any student suspended from school, in or out of school, will also be suspended from participating in and/or attending any school extracurricular activities or functions. At minimum, the length of the extracurricular suspension is equal to the number of days of the school suspension. The suspension from extracurricular activities begins on the date of notice of suspension and concludes no earlier than the first day the student returns to his/her regular class schedule.

**NOTE:** If a student is on suspension during a try-out period of an extracurricular activity, it will be at the discretion of administration if the student may participate in a try-out period. This exception may only be made on a student’s first violation.

### **Additional Extracurricular Consequences**

#### **First out-of-school suspension or accumulation of five (5) total days suspension in a school year:**

The student shall be suspended from all extracurricular programs for up to two calendar weeks (14 days). The building principal or his/her designee shall provide written notice of any such suspension to the student and to the student’s parent(s) or guardian(s).

#### **Second out-of-school suspension or accumulation of ten (10) total days suspension in a school year:**

The student shall be suspended from all extracurricular programs for not less than three calendar weeks (21 days). The building principal or his/her designee shall provide written notice of any such suspension to the student and the student’s parent(s) or guardian(s).

#### **Third out-of-school suspension or accumulation of fifteen (15) total days suspension in a school year:**

The student shall be suspended from all extracurricular programs for the remainder of the school year. The building principal or his/her designee shall provide written notice of any such suspension to the student and the student’s parent(s) or guardian(s).

**NOTE:** A principal may remove a student from extracurricular activities for the remainder of the school year for any single egregious act

## **Injuries**

All Coaches, The Athletic Director or Assistant Athletic Director in consultation with the school nurse reserves the right to withhold any student from participating in any school sponsored practices and/or contests, if it is determined that student is not in full health.

### **Return to Play from Injury**

Any time a student-athlete visits the emergency room or a doctor due to potential injury, that student must provide documentation from the doctor they visited, or their primary care physician stating they are safe to return to said sport or activity.

### **Treatment for Head Injuries**

The Amherst School District and Athletic Department are keenly aware of the nature and concern regarding the topic of head injuries. Significant progress has been made the last several years to ensure that students do not return to participate in athletic endeavors prior to reaching a full recovery. In recent history research has shown that participating in athletics while suffering from a concussion can result in lifelong injuries and complicated health issues.

If a student-athlete is suspected of suffering any head trauma, he/she will be removed from participation until evaluation from a doctor.

## **Concussion Information**

### **What is a concussion?**

A concussion is a type of brain injury resulting from an impact to the body causing the brain to strike the inside of the skull. A direct hit to the head is not required for a concussion to occur. Students suffering from concussions may experience symptoms for a few days, weeks, or in severe cases even months. Because the brain is very complex, every brain injury is different. Some symptoms may appear right away, while others may not show up for days or weeks after the concussion. Sometimes the injury makes it hard for people to recognize or admit that they are having problems.

The signs of concussion are subtle. Early on, problems may be missed. People may look fine even though they are acting or feeling differently.

### **Concussion Symptoms**

A concussion can affect a student in a variety of different ways: physically, cognitively, emotionally, and with sleep. Each student's symptoms are different in both occurrence and severity. Symptoms for a student should only be compared to how he/she felt, acted, slept, and performed prior to the concussion. One student's symptoms and recovery should never be compared to another student's.

Physical	Cognitive	Emotion	Sleep
Headache	Slow processing	Irritability	Trouble falling asleep
Dizziness	Mental fog	Sadness	Trouble waking
Balance difficulties	Trouble focusing	Nervousness	Sleeping more than usual
Nausea/vomiting	Memory problems	Embarrassment	Sleeping less than usual
Fatigue	Concentration problems	Anger	Drowsy
Sensitivity to light	Feeling confused	More or less emotional	Altered sleep schedule
Sensitivity to sound	Shortened attention span	than normal	
Change in vision	Difficulty planning	Anxiety	
Feeling sluggish	Difficulty organizing	Paranoia	
Speech problems	Slower reading		
	Difficulty with comprehension		
	Easily distracted		

**Who can diagnose a concussion?**

Only a licensed health care professional who has experience managing concussions can officially diagnose a student with a concussion.

**Danger Signs**

If any of the following are observed in an individual with a concussion, he/she should be taken to the doctor or Emergency Department immediately:

- Cannot be awakened
- Have one pupil (the black dot of your eye) larger than the other
- Have convulsions or seizures
- Have slurred speech
- Are getting more confused, restless, or agitated

**Recovery**

How fast people recover from a concussion varies from person to person. Although most people have a good recovery, how quickly depends on many factors. These factors include how severe the concussion was, what part of the brain was injured, their age, and how healthy they were before the concussion.

Rest is very important after a concussion because it helps the brain to heal. You will need to be extremely patient because healing takes time. As the days go by, you can expect to gradually feel better.

While you are healing, you should be very careful to avoid doing anything that could cause a blow to your head. On rare occasions, receiving another blow before a concussion has healed can be very dangerous and possibly fatal. Here are some tips for healing:

- Get plenty of sleep at night and rest during the day
- Return to activities gradually, not all at once
- Avoid activities that could lead to a 2nd brain injury until cleared by the doctor
- Take only those drugs that your doctor has approved
- Rest your brain – limit cognitive stimulation: cell phones, TV, computer, video games

The Amherst School District has implemented a Return to Learn Protocol for students with concussions. Be sure to notify the school nurse immediately if your child has been diagnosed with a concussion.

**Resources:**

NFHS Guidelines for Management of Concussions in Sports

- [https://www.nfhs.org/media/1018446/suggested\\_guidelines\\_management\\_concussion\\_april\\_2017.pdf](https://www.nfhs.org/media/1018446/suggested_guidelines_management_concussion_april_2017.pdf)

NFHS Learn Courses

- <https://www.nfhslearn.com/courses?searchText=Concussion>
- Concussion in Sports
- Concussion for Students

REAP<sup>sm</sup> the Benefits of Good Concussion Management

- <https://www.nfhs.org/media/1015690/reapaugust2015.pdf>