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[ImPact comes to WHS \(http://washtimesherald.com/localsports/x1191301341/ImPact-comes-to-WHS\)](http://washtimesherald.com/localsports/x1191301341/ImPact-comes-to-WHS)

By Todd Lancaster

[Washington Times-Herald \(http://washtimesherald.com\)](http://washtimesherald.com)

WASHINGTON — There was a time when an injury on the football field was treated with a chorus of “rub a little dirt on it and get back out there.”

However, with improvements in medical research and a better understanding of just how serious head injuries are, new precautions are now being put in place at every level of sports.

In the past few seasons, concussions in football are way up (over 20 percent in one University of Pittsburgh study) and the affects of years of head trauma are now becoming evident. The suicide of former Chicago Bear Dave Duerson is being blamed on multiple concussions.

As people become more and more aware of the long-term problems, precautions are started to be taken.

Washington High School is on the cutting edge with a new program known as ImPACT. It is a program of pretesting athletes, so when a head injury occurs, medical staff will have an accurate baseline to know when they can return.

“Helmets are not really designed to stop concussions, they are design to stop skull fractures and lacerations,” said Keith Tebbe, Washington’s certified athletic trainer from ProRehab.

“With the improvements in pad technology, kids think they are indestructible and go at it a little harder and take the bigger hits.”

ImPACT (Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) is the first, most-widely used, and most scientifically validated computerized concussion evaluation system.

Given the inherent difficulties in concussion management, it is important to manage concussions on an individualized basis and to implement baseline testing and/or post-injury neurocognitive testing. This type of concussion assessment can help to objectively evaluate the concussed athletes post-injury condition and track recovery for safe return to play, thus preventing the cumulative effects of concussion. In fact, neurocognitive testing has recently been called the “cornerstone” of proper concussion management.

“I think this is great for us,” said WHS football coach Kelly Brashear. “It has been a real emphasis from the NFL on down. We all love football, but the most important thing is to keep the kids safe, and this is a great tool. ProRehab does a great job of working with our kids, but this just improves upon it.”

Brashear said they have not had a lot of problems with concussions in the last few years, but he

believes this will give parents even more comfort as well.

“I’m really glad we are in at the ground floor of this,” said Brashear.

ImPACT can be administered by an athletic trainer, school nurse, athletic director, team coach, team doctor, or anyone trained to administer baseline testing.

ImPACT takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. The program measures multiple aspects of cognitive functioning in athletes. After a potential concussion, the athlete will be tested again in 24 hours and those results will be compared to the pretesting to help determine when they are ready to return to action.

“For the most time it will tell you when they can return, but for someone like (NHL player) Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins, it showed he was not able to return and he missed the rest of the season,” said Tebbe. “The last thing you want is a person returning too early.”

Football is not the only sport that is going through the testing. Washington athletes in soccer, wrestling, basketball, baseball and softball will also be tested before the start of their seasons.

“The testing is free through a grant from ACA,” said Tebe.

“The post-test will be with a physician and insurance should cover that.”

The basic test takes about 20-30 minutes on the computer. It covers reaction time and how fast some one can process cognitive skills.

— Some information also gleaned from the ImPACT website.



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