

REASONS FOR NOT REMOVING THE HELMET FROM A FOOTBALL PLAYER WITH A SUSPECTED NECK INJURY

Provided by the

IOWA HIGH SCHOOL
ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
and the
COMMITTEE ON SPORTS
MEDICINE of the IOWA
MEDICAL SOCIETY



IOWA MEDICAL SOCIETY

Removal of helmets from football players with potential cervical spine injuries can increase the severity of current injuries or create new injuries. FOOTBALL HELMETS SHOULD NOT BE REMOVED FROM PLAYERS WITH SUSPECTED NECK INJURIES unless the player's individual circumstances indicate otherwise.

The Iowa High School Athletic Association and the Committee on Sports Medicine of the Iowa Medical Society provide the following reasons not to remove the helmet from a football player with possible neck injuries.

- 1) The majority of head and neck injuries can be evaluated without helmet removal.
- 2) Neurological tests can be performed with the helmet strapped in place.
- 3) The athlete can be effectively immobilized on a back board with the helmet strapped in place.
- 4) Removing the face mask, without removing the helmet, allows one to open the airway and perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, if necessary. When removing the face mask, special tools such as an emergency shears should be used to remove the plastic clips holding the face mask in place.
- 5) Removing the helmet without simultaneously removing the shoulder pads, and stabilizing the neck, will cause hyperextension of the neck and can easily aggravate current injuries or create further injury.

Guidelines adapted from "NATA Athletic Helmet Removal Guidelines."