

DEFINITION:

To provide direction on the safe removal of protective sports equipment that includes helmet and shoulder pads. This procedure page uses football gear as an example, but these guidelines can be used with other sports equipment as well.

PROCEDURE:

A. Initial Evaluation

1. The initial evaluation should begin by assessing level of consciousness, breathing, and circulation. If the athlete is breathing and stable, but a neck injury is suspected-quick sensory and motor nerve exam should be initiated.
2. After the quick neurological exam on a stable athlete, the facemask should always be removed.

B. Face Mask Removal

1. Stabilize head.
2. Cut side and top attachments at loop to remove face mask.

C. Guidelines for Helmet Removal on the Field

1. If athlete has neck pain, numbness or tingling, extremity weakness or is unconscious, the helmet should not be removed on the playing field.
2. If access to airway is compromised, removal of helmet and shoulder pads as a unit may be initiated.

While backboard and straps are being prepared:

D. Chest Access

1. Cut jersey and front laces of shoulder pads
2. Flip out shoulder pads
3. Place hands on shoulders with thumbs grasping the clavicle and fingers surrounding the upper trapezius muscles.
4. Secure the athlete's head between the EMT's forearms.

E. Back Board Utilization

1. Person at head initiates commands and oversees proper placement and techniques
2. Three on each side of body: one at shoulders, one at hips, and one at legs.
3. One other person is in charge of backboard and slides it into place
4. Person at head gives command to lift athlete and slide backboard into place from feet. If helmet is not resting on board, padding can be added to fill space
5. Fasten straps and tape helmet to board
6. Chinstrap remains in place unless it interferes with airway
7. Recheck sensory and motor nerve vitals for changes and document

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F. If Removal of Helmet and/or Shoulder Pads are necessary, remove as a unit

1. Cut chin straps
2. Release cheek pad snaps with 3 tongue depressors
3. Cut shoulder pad straps
4. Cut both the jersey and shirt up sleeves towards midline of body
5. Person at head stabilizes maxilla and occiput and gives commands
6. Three people on each side, with one stabilizing head. Another person removes the equipment. Person tilts helmet slightly forward and slides off head.

CAUTION: DO NOT SPREAD APART SIDES OF HELMET. Shoulder pads, jersey, and shirt are then slid off with great care as a unit.

NOTES & PRECAUTIONS:

If athlete is face down, person at head crosses arms and a log roll technique is used to initiate evaluation.