

Concussion Information Sheet for Parents & Swimmers

Dear Parent/Guardian and Athletes,

This information sheet is provided to assist you and your child in recognizing the signs and symptoms of a concussion. Every athlete is different and responds to a brain injury differently, so seek medical attention if you suspect your child has a concussion. Once a concussion occurs, it is very important your athlete return to normal activities slowly, so he/she does not do more damage to his/her brain.

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is an injury to the brain that may be caused by a blow, bump, or jolt to the head. Concussions may also happen after a fall or hit that jars the brain. A blow elsewhere on the body can cause a concussion even if an athlete does not hit his/her head directly. Concussions can range from mild to severe.

Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

Athletes do not have to be “knocked out” to have a concussion. In fact, less than 1 out of 10 concussions result in loss of consciousness. Concussion symptoms can develop right away or up to 48 hours after the injury. Ignoring any signs or symptoms of a concussion puts your child’s health at risk!

Signs Observed by Coaches, Officials, Parents or Guardians

- Appears dazed, stunned or confused
- Unsure about event, location or name of meet
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes – irritability, sadness, nervousness, emotional
- Can’t recall events before or after incident

Symptoms Reported by Athlete

- Any headache or “pressure” in head - how badly it hurts does not matter
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not “feel right”
- Trouble falling asleep
- Sleeping more or less than usual

Be Honest

Encourage your athlete to be honest with you, his/her coach and your health care provider about his/her symptoms. Many young athletes get caught up in the moment and/or feel pressured to return to sports before they are ready. It is better to miss practice or meets than the entire season... or risk permanent damage!

Seek Medical Attention Right Away

Seeking medical attention on the day of the event is an important first step if you suspect or are told your swimmer has a concussion. A qualified health care professional will be able to determine how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports and other daily activities:

- No athlete should return to activity on the same day he/she gets a concussion
- No athlete may return to training, regardless of sport, until he/she is cleared by a health care professional with a note specifying clearance. Athletes should NEVER return to the pool if they still have ANY symptoms..... in case an athlete returns with a note and then during the practice complains of a headache or other symptoms
- Parents and coaches should never pressure any athlete to return to play

The Dangers of Returning Too Soon

Returning to the pool too early may cause Second Impact Syndrome (SIS) or Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS). SIS occurs when a second blow to the head happens before an athlete has completely recovered from a concussion. This second impact causes the brain to swell, possibly resulting in brain damage, paralysis, and even death. PCS can occur after a second impact. PCS can result in permanent, long-term concussion symptoms. The risk of SIS and PCS is the reason why no athlete should be allowed to participate in any physical activity before they are cleared by a qualified health care professional.

Recovery

A concussion can affect school, work, and sports. Along with coaches and teachers, the school nurse, athletic trainer, employer, and other school administrators should be aware of the athlete's injury and their roles in helping the child recover. During the recovery time after a concussion, physical and mental rest is required. A concussion upsets the way the brain normally works and causes it to work longer and harder to complete even simple tasks. Activities that require concentration and focus may make symptoms worse and cause the brain to heal slower. Studies show that children's brains take several weeks to heal following a concussion.

Returning to Daily Activities

1. Be sure your child gets plenty of rest and enough sleep at night – no late nights. Keep the same bedtime weekdays and weekends.
2. Encourage daytime naps or rest breaks when your child feels tired or worn-out.
3. Limit your child's activities that require a lot of thinking or concentration (including social activities, homework, video games, texting, computer, driving, job-related activities, movies, parties). These activities can slow the brain's recovery.
4. Limit your child's physical activity, especially those activities where another injury or blow to the head may occur.
5. Have your qualified health care professional check your child's symptoms at different times to help guide recovery.

Returning to School

1. Your athlete may need to initially return to school on a limited basis, for example for only half-days, at first. This should be done under the supervision of a qualified health care professional.

2. Inform teacher(s), school counselor or administrator(s) about the injury and symptoms. School personnel should be instructed to watch for:
 - a. Increased problems paying attention.
 - b. Increased problems remembering or learning new information.
 - c. Longer time needed to complete tasks or assignments.
 - d. Greater irritability and decreased ability to cope with stress.
 - e. Symptoms worsen (headache, tiredness) when doing schoolwork.
3. Be sure your child takes multiple breaks during study time and watch for worsening of symptoms.
4. If your child is still having concussion symptoms, he/she may need extra help with school-related activities. As the symptoms decrease during recovery, the extra help can be removed gradually.

Returning to the Pool

1. Returning to the pool is specific for each person. As an example, California law requires written permission from a health care provider before an athlete can return to play. Follow instructions and guidance provided by a health care professional. It is important that you, your child and your child's coach follow these instructions carefully.
2. Your child should NEVER be on deck, practice, or participate in competition if he/she still has ANY symptoms. (Be sure that your child does not have any symptoms at rest and while doing any physical activity and/or activities that require a lot of thinking or concentration).
3. Be sure that the athletic trainer, coach and physical education teacher are aware of your child's injury and symptoms.
4. Your athlete should complete a step-by-step exercise-based progression, under the direction of a qualified healthcare professional.

Resources:

Insurance - USA Swimming provides an excess accident medical insurance policy through Mutual of Omaha for USA Swimming members while participating or volunteering in a USA Swimming sponsored or sanctioned event. Details of the insurance coverage are on the USA Swimming website under Insurance and Risk Management.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - www.cdc.gov/Concussion

Zurich Concussion Conference (2012) - Consensus statement on concussion in sport: the 4th International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich, November 2012.
<http://bjsm.bmj.com/content/47/5/250.full>

ODH Violence and Injury Prevention Program - www.healthyohioprogram.org/concussion

National Federation of State High School Associations - www.nfhs.org – Index concussions and see “A parent’s guide to concussion in sports”.

USA Swimming Operational Risk Committee Consensus Statement on Concussions

1.0 Purpose

The operational risk committee is responsible for providing a proactive environment regarding assessment of risks, and developing guidelines and educational requirements. USA Swimming and its members are aware of the growing concern regarding concussion management. The purpose of this document is to implement guidelines for member clubs (Clubs), Local Swimming Committees (LSCs) and meet hosts (Hosts). USA Swimming is providing a sample document which may be modified to meet your state requirements.

2.0 Guidelines

All athletes, coaches, officials and parents should receive fact sheets on concussions from their Club, LSC and/or Hosts. Any athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion should be removed immediately and should not return until evaluated and cleared by a licensed health care professional, trained and experienced in evaluating and management of concussions, acting within scope of practice. Compliance with all state and local laws dealing with concussion is the responsibility of the Club and/or LSC. A sample fact sheet is attached to this Policy. Electronic communication of the fact sheet (email blast) is permitted.

3.0 Application of the Guidelines

Clubs, LSCs, and Hosts are responsible for compliance with state laws regarding concussion management and education. Each state may have specific regulations that impact USA Swimming member clubs, coaches, officials, and/or sanctioned events. Some examples: Many states require coaches and officials to take courses on recognizing the symptoms of concussions and head injuries. Other states require sharing of fact sheets on concussions with coaching staff, officials, athletes and parents. A few states, such as California, may require organizations using school district facilities provide a statement of compliance with the policies for the management of concussion and head injuries required of the school districts by state laws. All of these guidelines are designed to protect an athlete, who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury during an event, from returning to practice or competition until they are evaluated and cleared by a licensed health care professional trained in the evaluation and management of concussions, acting within the scope of his or her practice. Most states, the National Federation of State High School Associations, and the CDC have educational resources that can be utilized. Concussion fact sheets must be shared with coaches, athletes, officials and parents.

4.0 Objectives

The primary goal of the Guidelines is to reduce the risk of harm to athletes and to educate coaches, parents, officials, clubs, LSCs, and hosts on the importance of concussion management. To the extent that health care professionals are involved in USA Swimming sanctioned events, they should review the Guidelines and the Consensus statement on concussion in sport developed at the 4th International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich, November 2012, or similar educational material.

5.0 What is a Concussion?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) define concussion as “a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works.” Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head to move rapidly back and forth. The Zurich Conference on Concussion in Sport also states that concussion typically results in the rapid onset of short-lived impairment of neurological function that resolves spontaneously. However, symptoms and signs may evolve over a number of minutes to hours or in some cases may be even more prolonged.

6.0 Signs and Symptoms of Concussions:

Athletes do not have to be “knocked out” to have a concussion. In fact, less than 1 out of 10 concussions result in loss of consciousness. Concussion symptoms can develop right away or up to 48 hours after the injury. Ignoring signs or symptoms can put an athlete’s health at risk!

Signs Observed by Coaches, Officials, Parents or Guardians

- Appears dazed, stunned or confused
- Unsure about event, location, or name of meet
- Forgets an instruction or assignment
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior or personality changes – irritability, sadness, nervousness, emotional
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Symptoms Reported by Athlete

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- Does not “feel right”
- Trouble falling asleep

- Sleeping more or less than usual

7.0 Administration

- Most states have passed legislation to establish laws and policies for concussion management and education to effectively prevent and diagnosis the condition.
- Each Club, LSC, and Host is responsible to identify and be in compliance with the state and local laws including educational and insurance requirements for the management and treatment of concussions.
- All coaches, officials, athletes, and parents should be familiar with the concussion information sheet for swimmers and the Guidelines.
- LSC Officials Chairs are responsible for distributing the Guidelines to “Unattached” Officials.
- USA Swimming provides members an excess accident medical insurance policy through Mutual of Omaha. This policy is excess to a member’s personal medical insurance coverage while participating in an USA Swimming sanctioned, sponsored, or approved event, including practice. The policy becomes primary if the member has no medical insurance coverage with a \$100 deductible. The coverage is outlined on the USA Swimming website under member resources/programs and services/insurance and risk management. If your state has a specific insurance requirement, USA Swimming Risk Management should be notified and contacted immediately so the appropriate certificates of insurance (COIs) can be issued.

8.0 Reference Material

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/Concussion

Zurich Concussion Conference (2012)

Consensus statement on concussion in sport: the 4th International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich, November 2012 - <http://bjsm.bmj.com/content/47/5/250.full>

California Assembly Bill 25

School districts that permit athletic competition by nonprofit organizations require an athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury during the meet or practice to be immediately removed from the activity for the remainder of the day. The athlete cannot return until he or she is evaluated by, and receives written clearance from, a licensed health care provider, trained in the management of concussions, acting within the scope of his or her practice.

ODH Violence and Injury Prevention Program

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National Federation of State High School Associations

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