



POST HEAD INJURY INSTRUCTIONS

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your child may have sustained a concussion, and by policy has been removed from the pool until he/she has been medically cleared to return to swim by a health care professional. We are not dictating how or by whom your child should be managed medically.

The following serves as general guidelines only for immediate management during the first 24 hours:

- **Diet** – drink only clear liquids for the first 8-12 hours and eat reduced amounts of foods thereafter for the remainder of the first 24 hours.
- **Pain Medication** – do not take any pain medication except Tylenol. Dosing instructions provided with pain medications should be followed.
- **Activity** – activity should be limited for the first 24 hours, this would involve no school, video games, extracurricular or physical activities or work when applicable.
- **Observation** – several times during the first 24 hours:
 - Check to see that the pupils are equal. Both pupils may be large or small, but the right should be the same size as the left.
 - Check the athlete to be sure that he/she is easily aroused; that is, responds to shaking or being spoken to, and when awakened, reacts normally.
 - Check for and be aware of any significant changes. (See #5 below)
 - **Significant changes**
 - Conditions may change significantly within the next 24 hours. **Immediately obtain emergency care for any of the following signs or symptoms:**
 - Persistent or projectile vomiting
 - Unequal pupil size (see 4a above)
 - Difficulty in being aroused
 - Clear or bloody drainage from the ear or nose
 - Worsening headache
 - Seizures
 - Slurred speech
 - Can't recognize people or places – increasing confusion
 - Weakness or numbness in the arms or legs
 - Unusual behavior change – increasing irritability
 - Loss of consciousness
- **Improvement**—the best indication that an athlete who has suffered a significant head injury is progressing satisfactorily is that he/she is alert and behaving normally.
- **Contact your health care provider**—before returning to physical activities, contact your health care provider to be evaluated. You are encouraged to talk to your health care provider about the following:
 - Management of symptoms
 - Appropriate levels of school activity or the need for reducing academic coursework for a temporary period of time
 - Appropriate levels of physical activity
- **Written medical clearance required prior to returning your child to swim**
 - No athlete should return to activity on the same day he/she gets a concussion.
 - Before your child will be allowed to return to swim he/she must be cleared by a health care professional with a note specifying clearance.
 - Athletes should NEVER return to the pool if they still have ANY symptoms.
 - Parents and coaches should never pressure any athlete to return to swim.

Additional Information on Concussion Recovery and Returning to Swim

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.

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.

Returning to Daily Activities

- Be sure your child gets plenty of rest and enough sleep at night – no late nights. Keep the same bedtime weekdays and weekends.
- Encourage daytime naps or rest breaks when your child feels tired or worn-out.
- 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.
- Limit your child's physical activity, especially those where another injury or blow to the head may occur.
- Have your qualified health care professional check your child's symptoms at different times to help guide recovery.

Returning to School

- 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.
- Inform teacher(s), school counselor or administrator(s) about the injury and symptoms. School personnel should be instructed to watch for:
 - Increased problems paying attention.
 - Increased problems remembering or learning new information.
 - Longer time needed to complete tasks or assignments.
 - Greater irritability and decreased ability to cope with stress.
 - Symptoms worsen (headache, tiredness) when doing schoolwork.
- Be sure your child takes multiple breaks during study time and watch for worsening of symptoms.
- 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

- Returning to the pool is specific for each person. Utah law requires written permission from a health care provider before an athlete can return to swim. 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.
- 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).
- Be sure that the athletic trainer, coach and physical education teacher are aware of your child's injury and symptoms.
- 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 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.

www.usaswimming.org/riskmanagement

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>

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

This Post Concussion Instruction information was prepared using the Sports Concussion Management Plan developed by the University of Utah’s Division of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and information from USA Swimming. The contents of this “Post Head Injury Instructions” are not intended as legal or medical advice. Utah Swimming and its officers and employees are neither responsible for nor accept any liability for any direct or indirect loss or damages arising from or connected to the use of this information.