**MERC Concussion Management Protocol**

Return to Swim

Return to swim (RTS) following a concussion involves a gradual progression once the individual is symptom free. There are many risks to premature return to swim. These include: a greater risk for a second concussion because of a lower concussion threshold, second impact syndrome (abnormal brain blood flow that can result in death), exacerbation of any current symptoms, and possibly increased risk for additional injury due to alteration in balance. These New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHAA) concussion management protocols are based on the most recent international expert opinion. No athlete should return to swim while symptomatic. Swimmers are prohibited from returning to the pool the day the concussion is sustained. If there is any doubt as to whether a swimmer has sustained a concussion, it should be treated as a concussion. Once the athlete is symptom free at rest for 24 hours and has a signed release from a professional healthcare provider, he or she may begin the return to swim progression (provided there are no other mitigating circumstances).

Symptoms of a concussion include, but are not necessarily limited to:

* Amnesia (e.g. decreased or absent memory of events prior to or immediately after the injury, or difficulty retaining new information)
* Confusion or appearing dazed
* Headache or head pressure
* Loss of consciousness
* Balance difficulty or dizziness, or clumsy movements
* Double or blurry vision
* Sensitivity to light and/or sound
* Nausea, vomiting, and/or loss of appetite
* Irritability, sadness or other changes in personality
* Feeling sluggish, foggy, groggy, or lightheaded
* Concentration or focusing problems
* Slowed reaction times, drowsiness
* Fatigue and/or sleep issues (e.g. sleeping more or less than usual)

In New York State, the diagnosis of a concussion remains within the scope of practice of the following medical providers: physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants. As part of their licensure, these medical providers are encouraged to remain current on best practices in their fields.

If any post-concussion symptoms occur while in the return to swim progression, the athlete should drop back to the previous asymptomatic condition and try to progress again after a 24-hour period of rest has passed.