

CONCUSSION IN YOUTH SPORTS

Fact Sheet and Informed Consent Acknowledgement

The Utah law, **Protection of Athletes with Head Injuries Act**, directly affects how you need to respond to athlete injuries. It requires that:

Before permitting a child to participate in a sporting event (including practice), a written copy of the concussion and head injury policy must be provided to the parent or legal guardian of the child. (This fact sheet serves that purpose)
The amateur sports organization (most often, a swim club) shall obtain the signature of the parent or legal guardian of the child, acknowledging that the parent or legal guardian has read, understands, and agrees to abide by, the concussion and head injury policy.

A child participant suspected of sustaining a concussion or a traumatic head injury must be removed from all sporting events. Written medical clearance from an appropriate health care provider is to be obtained prior to a child returning to participation in sporting events.

THE FACTS

A concussion is a **brain injury**

All concussions are **serious**

Concussions can occur **without** loss of consciousness

Recognition and proper management of concussions when they **first occur** can help prevent further injury or even death.

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION? A concussion is a type of traumatic head injury that interferes with the normal function of the brain. Concussions can range from mild to severe.

HOW DOES IT OCCUR? Although it most commonly occurs after a direct blow to the head, it can occur after a blow elsewhere that is transmitted to the head. What may appear to be only a mild jolt or blow to the head or body can result in a concussion. It can occur even if a person is not knocked or does not lose consciousness.

RECOGNIZING A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION Watch for the following two things: A forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head AND Any change in the athlete's behavior, thinking, or physical functioning. (See following SIGNS and SYMPTOMS of concussion)

DURATION OF SIGNS/SYMPTOMS Signs and symptoms of concussion can last from several minutes to days, weeks, month, or even longer in some cases.

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

REMOVE FROM ACTIVITY

Athletes who experience any of these signs or symptoms after a bump or blow to the head will be kept from play until given permission to return to swim by a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussions. Remember, you can't see a concussion and some athletes may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury. If you have any suspicion that your athlete has a concussion, you should keep the athlete out of the meet or practice.

WHAT CAN A PARENT TO PREVENT AND RESPOND PROPERLY TO A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION?

As a parent, you can play a key role in preventing concussions and responding to them properly when they occur. Here are some steps you can take to ensure the best outcome for your child:

Insist that safety comes first

Reinforce safe swimming techniques taught by your child's coach and encourage them to follow the rules.

Encourage good sportsmanship at all times.

Review this fact sheet with your child to help them recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion.

Teach athletes and others that it's not smart to swim with a concussion. Sometimes athletes and parents wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to swim injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to swim. Don't let athletes persuade you that they're “just fine” after they have sustained any bump or blow to the head.

Prevent long-term problems. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first— usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling, permanent brain damage, and even death. This more serious condition is called second impact syndrome. Do not let your child return to swim until they have been evaluated and given permission to return to swim by a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion. Remind your child, “It's better to miss a meet, or some training, than the whole season.”

ACTION PLAN: WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN A CONCUSSION IS SUSPECTED?

Remove the athlete from play. Look for the signs and symptoms of a concussion if your athlete has experienced a bump or blow to the head. Athletes who experience signs or symptoms of concussion should not be allowed to return to play. When in doubt, keep them out.

Ensure that your athlete is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional. Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods that they can use to assess the severity of concussions. As a parent, recording, and sharing, the following information can help health care professionals in assessing the athlete after the injury:

Cause of the injury and force of the hit or blow to the head

Any loss of consciousness (passed out/knocked out) and if so, for how long

Any memory loss immediately following the injury

Number of previous concussions (if any)

Allow the athlete to return to swim only with permission from a health care professional with experience in evaluating for concussion. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. Prevent common long-term problems and the rare Second Impact Syndrome by delaying the athlete's return to the pool until the swimmer receives appropriate medical evaluation and approval for return to swim.

For more detailed information on concussion, visit: www.cdc.gov/headsup