



# **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](http://www.cdc.gov/headsup)

*This fact sheet 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 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.*



## Concussion Informed Consent Acknowledgement

I, \_\_\_\_\_ hereby acknowledge having received education  
*Athlete(s) Name*

about the signs, symptoms, and risks of sport related concussion. I also acknowledge my responsibility to report to my coaches, parent(s)/guardian(s) any signs or symptoms of a concussion.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature and printed name of athlete(s)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

I, the parent/guardian of the athlete(s) named above, hereby acknowledge having received the *Utah Swimming Concussion in Youth Sports: Fact Sheet and Informed Consent Acknowledgement* (three pages). I have read and understand its contents. I agree to abide by the concussion and head injury policy outlined therein. I also acknowledge that if I have any questions regarding

- The signs or symptoms of a concussion or other head injuries,
- The need to seek medical attention and
- The protocol for returning to daily activities, school and the swimming pool,

I will consult with a licensed health care provider.

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature and printed name of parent/guardian*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

*This signed acknowledgement may be returned to the swim club through an electronic medium including but not limited to, fax or electronic mail.*



# 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 activities 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](http://www.usaswimming.org/riskmanagement)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** - [www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion)

**Zurich Concussion Conference (2012)** - Consensus statement on concussion in sport: the 4<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.nfhs.org)– Index concussions and see “A parent’s guide to concussion in sports”.

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