



Concussion Awareness & Safety Recognition Policy

Educational Material for Parents/Legal Guardians and Athletes

(Content Meets MDH Requirements)

Sources: Minnesota Department of Health, CDC and the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE)

UNDERSTANDING CONCUSSION

Headache	Pressure in the Head	Nausea/Vomiting	Dizziness Sensitive
Balance Problems	Double Vision	Blurry Vision	to Light Fogginess
Sensitivity to Noise	Sluggishness Memory	Haziness	“Feeling Down”
Poor Concentration	Problems Feeling	Confusion	Sleep Problems Grogginess
Not “Feeling Right”	Irritable	Slow Reaction Time	

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A **concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury** that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by a fall, bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. A concussion can be caused by a shaking, spinning or a sudden stopping and starting of the head. Even a “ding,” “getting your bell rung,” or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious. A concussion can happen even if you haven’t been knocked out.

You can’t see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussions can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If the athlete reports any symptoms of a concussion, or if you notice symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away. An athlete who may have had a concussion should not return to play on the day of the injury and until a health care professional says they are okay to return to play.

IF YOU SUSPECT A CONCUSSION:

- SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION RIGHT AWAY** - A health care professional will be able to decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for the athlete to return to regular activities, including sports. Don’t hide it, report it. Ignoring symptoms and trying to “tough it out” often makes it worse.
- KEEPING YOUR ATHLETE OUT OF PLAY** - Concussions take time to heal. Don’t let the athlete return to play the day of injury and until a health care professional says it’s okay. An athlete who returns to play too soon, while the brain is still healing, risks a greater chance of having a second concussion. Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and take longer to recover than adults. Repeat or second concussions increase the time it takes to recover and can be very serious. They can cause permanent brain damage, affecting the athlete for lifetime. They can be fatal. It is better to miss one game than the whole season.
- TELL THE COACH ABOUT ANY PREVIOUS CONCUSSION** – Coaches should know if an athlete had a previous concussion. An athlete’s coach may not know about a concussion received in another sport or activity unless you notify them.

SIGNS OBSERVED BY PARENTS/LEGAL GUARDIANS:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Can’t recall events prior to or after a hit
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood or behavior, or personality changes

CONCUSSION DANGER SIGNS:

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in a person with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. An athlete should receive immediate medical attention if after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body s/he exhibits any of the following danger signs:

- One pupil larger than the other
- Is drowsy or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people/places
- Becomes increasingly confused
- Has unusual behavior
- Loses consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously.)

HOW TO RESPOND TO A REPORT OF A CONCUSSION:

If an athlete reports one or more symptoms of a concussion after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, s/he should be kept out of athletic play the day of the injury. The athlete should only return to play with permission from a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion. During recovery, rest is key. Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration (such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games) may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse. Athletes who return to sports after a concussion may need to take rests breaks and be given extra help and time. After a concussion, returning to sports is a gradual process that should be monitored by a health care professional. **If a concussion is diagnosed, the athlete must sit out for a minimum of 7 consecutive days AND a healthcare provider must provide written clearance for the athlete to return to play.**

Remember: Concussion affects people differently. While most athletes with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have symptoms that last for days, or even weeks. A more serious concussion can last for months or longer. To learn more, go to www.cdc.gov/concussion.

Please check the box located on page 1 of this Application for Participation in Special Olympics packet indicating that you have read and understand the above Concussion Awareness Policy.