

Sports Epidemic Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition Program Guide

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The **Sports Epidemic Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition Program** is a formal education and training program designed to address concussion awareness and participant safety. Material in this program guide covers the following:

- A. Understanding a concussion and the potential consequences of this injury
- B. Recognizing concussion signs and symptoms and how to respond
- C. Learning about steps for returning to activity after a concussion
- D. Focusing on prevention and preparedness to help keep participants safe

Sports Epidemic will maintain an adequate system to regularly:

a. promote a “concussion awareness and safety recognition program including but not limited to the Online Concussion Course offered by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To access the Online Concussion course go to <https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/index.html>. All Sports Epidemic coaches, instructors, and officials will be required to take the online CDC course.

b. Communicate in writing (including by electronic means) its “concussion awareness and safety recognition program” to all “participants” in Sports Epidemic sports or activities, as well as parents and coaches. It includes information regarding the nature of risk of concussions, including but not limited to how to recognize concussion symptoms (see remainder of this document). In addition, Sports Epidemic will provide CDC concussion factsheets to participants, parents, coaches, officials and volunteers.

- Participants are defined as “any individual practicing or participating in any Sports Epidemic sport or activity”.

Important: Insured injury management standards mandate that “participants” who are suspected of suffering a concussion be removed from the game and must provide a written clearance from a licensed physician before being allow to return to play.

Part A- What is a concussion and what are its consequences

What...

- A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (or TBI) that changes the way the brain normally works.
- A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head.
- Concussions can also occur from a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth.
- Even what seems to be a mild bump to the head can be serious.
- Concussions can happen even if you haven't been knocked out. They can be serious even if you've just been "dinged" or "had your bell rung".
- Concussions can have a more serious effect on a young, developing brain and need to be addressed correctly.

Consequences...

- Concussions can create chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretch and damage brain cells.
- All concussions are serious. Medical providers may describe a concussion as a "mild" brain injury because concussions are usually not life-threatening. Even so, the effects of a concussion can be serious.
- A concussion can affect your ability to do schoolwork and other activities (such as playing video games, working on a computer, studying, driving, or exercising). Most people with a concussion get better, but it is important to give your brain time to heal.

Part B- Recognize concussion signs and symptoms and how to respond

Signs and symptoms generally show up soon after the injury. However, you may not know how serious the injury is at first and some symptoms may not show up for hours or days. For example, in the first few minutes your child or teen might be a little confused or a bit dazed, but an hour later your child might not be able to remember how he or she got hurt. You should continue to check for signs of concussion right after the injury and a few days after the injury. If your child or teen's concussion signs or symptoms get worse, you should take him or her to a emergency facility right away.

Recognition

You can't see a concussion, but you might notice one or more of the symptoms listed below or that you "don't feel right" soon after, a few days after or even weeks after the injury:

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Bothered by light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy
- Difficulty paying attention
- Memory problems
- Confusion

Signs observed by parents or guardians

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about events
- Answers questions slowly
- Repeats questions
- Can't recall events *prior* to the hit, bump, or fall
- Can't recall events *after* the hit, bump, or fall
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Forgets class schedule or assignment

Symptoms reported by your child or teen:

Thinking/Remembering:

- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Feeling more slowed down

- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy

Physical:

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Fatigue or feeling tired
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Numbness or tingling
- Does not “feel right”

Emotional:

- Irritable
- Sad
- More emotional than usual
- Nervous Sleep*
- Drowsy
- Sleeps *less* than usual
- Sleeps *more* than usual
- Has trouble falling asleep

**Only ask about sleep symptoms if the injury occurred on a prior day.*

Danger Signs- Be alert for symptoms that worsen over time. Your child or teen should be seen in an emergency facility right away if he or she has:

- One pupil (the black part in the middle of the eye) larger than the other
- Drowsiness or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Difficulty recognizing people or places
- Increasing confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Unusual behavior
- Loss of consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

Important: Children and teens with a concussion should NEVER return to sports or recreation activities on the same day the injury occurred. They should delay returning to their activities until a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion says they are symptom-free and it’s OK to return to play. This means, until permitted, not returning to:

- Physical Education (PE) class
- Sports practices or games
- Physical activity at recess

How to respond- Participants

- 1. Tell your coaches and your parents.** Never ignore a bump or blow to the head even if you feel fine. Also, tell your coach right away if you think you have a concussion or if one of your teammates might have a concussion.
- 2. Get a medical check-up.** A doctor or other health care professional can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to play.
- 3. Give yourself time to get better.** If you have a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes for you to recover and may cause more damage to your brain. It is important to rest and not return to play until you get the OK from your health care professional that you are symptom-free.

How to Respond- Parents

- 1. Seek medical attention right away.** A health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion can determine how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child or teen to return to normal activities, including physical activity and school (concentration and learning activities).
- 2. Help them take time to get better.** If your child or teen has a concussion, her or his brain needs time to heal. Your child or teen may need to limit activities while he/she is recovering from a concussion. Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer or playing video games may cause concussion symptoms (such as headache or tiredness) to reappear or get worse. After a concussion, physical and cognitive activities such as concentration and learning should be carefully managed and monitored by a health care official

Part C- Steps for returning to activity after a concussion

- Help your child or teen get needed support when returning to school or sports activity after a concussion.
- Talk with your child's your child's teachers, school nurse, speech-language pathologist, counselors, youth leaders or coach about your child's concussion and symptoms. Your child may feel frustrated, sad, and even angry because they cannot return to recreation and sports right away, or cannot keep up with schoolwork. Your child may also feel isolated from peers and social networks.
- Talk often with your child about these issues and offer your support and encouragement. As your child's symptoms decrease, the extra help or support can be removed gradually.
- Children and teens who return to school and sports activities after a concussion may need to:
 - Take rest breaks as needed
 - Spend less time participating at school and sports activities
 - Be given more time to take tests or complete assignments
 - Receive help with schoolwork, and/or
 - Reduce time spent reading, writing, or on the computer.

5 Step Return to Play Progression

It is important for an participant's parent(s) and coach(es) to watch for concussion symptoms after each day's return to play progression activity. A participant should only move to the next step if they do not have any new symptoms at the current step. If a participant's symptoms come back or if he or she gets new symptoms, this is a sign that the participant is pushing too hard. The participant should stop these activities and the participant's medical provider should be contacted. After more rest and no concussion symptoms, the participant can start at the previous step.

- **Baseline: Back to School First**
Participant is back to their regular school activities, is no longer experiencing symptoms from the injury when doing normal activities, and has the green-light from their health care provider to begin the return to play process.

- **Step 1: Light aerobic activity**
Begin with light aerobic exercise only to increase a participant's heart rate. This means about 5 to 10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking, or light jogging. No weight lifting at this point.
- **Step 2: Moderate activity**
Continue with activities to increase a participant's heart rate with body or head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weightlifting (less time and/or less weight from their typical routine).
- **Step 3: Heavy, non-contact activity**
Add heavy non-contact physical activity, such as sprinting/running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine, non-contact sport-specific drills (in 3 planes of movement).
- **Step 4: Practice & full contact**
Young participant may return to practice and full contact (if appropriate for the sport) in controlled practice.
- **Step 5: Competition**
Young participant may return to competition.

Part D- Focus on Prevention and Preparedness

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Every sport is different, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

- Use the proper sports equipment, including personal protective equipment. In order for equipment to protect you, it must be:
 - The right equipment for the game, position, or activity
 - Worn correctly and the correct size and fit
 - Used every time you play or practice
- Follow your coach/leader/official's rules for safety and the rules of the sport
- Participants should avoid unsafe actions such as:
 - Striking another participant in the head
 - Using their head to contact another participant
 - Making illegal contacts or checking, tackling, or colliding with an unprotected opponent
 - Trying to injure or put another participant at risk for injury.
- Practice good sportsmanship at all times.
- Report a suspected concussion at first opportunity, either regarding yourself or another participant

If a concussion is suspected during a **Sports Epidemic** activity, we will conduct the following action plan:

- **Remove the participant** from play.
- **Keep a participant with a possible concussion out of play for at least 24 hours after the injury and until cleared by a health care provider.**
- **Record and share information about the injury**, such as how it happened and the participant's symptoms, to help a health care provider assess the participant.
- **Inform the participant's parent(s) or guardian(s)** about the possible concussion and refer them to CDC's website for concussion information.

- **Ask for written instructions from the participant's health care provider** about the steps you should take to help the participant safely return to play. Before returning to play an participant should:
 - Be back to doing their regular school activities.
 - Not have any symptoms from the injury when doing normal activities.
 - Have the green-light from their health care provider to begin the return to play process.