

SASKATCHEWAN HIGH SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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SHSAA CONCUSSION PROTOCOL

POLICY STATEMENT

Introduction

Education and providing information about Concussions in sport continues to be an area of emphasis for all groups that are involved in delivering sport to today's youth. The creation of a concussion management protocol for the Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association was initiated at the 2013 AGM. This organization, along with many other organizations involved in youth sport, is committed to making a concussion awareness policy for all those individuals who are involved in student athlete sport.

Concussions can happen to anyone and can occur in virtually any activity. A study at McGill University indicated that one of the key factors behind serious and/or repeated concussions was a lack of awareness about brain injury. In conjunction with the Sport Medicine and Science Council, the Saskatchewan Brain Injury Association and the University of Saskatchewan, a number of initiatives and protocols have been developed.

Facts about Concussions

- You don't need to be knocked out to suffer a concussion
- A concussion is a mild brain injury that affects the brain's functions
- Every four minutes, a concussion occurs in Canada
- There are approximately 6,000 concussions in Saskatchewan every year
- A person is four times as likely to suffer a second concussion after having the first one and the effects may be more serious with each subsequent injury
- Signs/symptoms can show up immediately or may not be noticeable for hours or days
- Concussion symptoms differ with each person
- One in five sports injuries is a head injury
- If you think you have a concussion, YOU SHOULD NOT RETURN TO PLAY. See your health care professional for diagnosis, treatment and a 'Return to Play' and 'Return to Learn' strategy.

Objectives of the SHSAA Protocol

The goal of this policy and its protocols are to act as tools to help prevent, recognize and properly manage concussion in our school sports programs.

The protocol has been developed to ensure an increased provincial awareness of head injury and concussions; provide a united, consistent and reliable message about brain injuries, concussion prevention and treatment.

WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT!

Concussion Management Guidelines

Concussion is a brain injury and is defined from the Consensus Statement 2012 as a complex pathophysiological process affecting the brain, induced by biomechanical forces. Practically it is a brain injury that causes a disruption of normal brain function leading to symptoms that can be physical, cognitive, emotional/behavioural and/or related to sleep.

A concussion may be caused either by a direct blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull.

PREVENTION

Prevention is the first objective in concussion management. The goal is to create an environment that will minimize concussion incidence and complications.

Education

Coaches

- All coaches involved in school sport must complete the free Concussion Management course located at: <http://www.schoolcoach.ca/courses.aspx>
 - Instructions for completing the course http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0044/3873/Concussion_in_Sports_2014.pdf
- Other approved courses include:
 - *Making Headway in Football* <http://www.coach.ca/making-head-way-concussion-elearning-series-p153487%20/>
 - *Heads Up - Concussions in Youth Sports* <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/headsup/training/>
- In all of these accepted courses, the coach will have the opportunity to print their certificate of completion which should be submitted to the school. Each school is to track and compile the certificates of the coaches involved in delivering school sport as part of the extra-curricular programming.

Students

- All student athletes should receive concussion education prior to participation. Education for players is crucial if they are to self-report, respect their opponent, and play safe.
- Resources for student education could include the following:
 - On-line training at <http://nfhslearn.com/courses?searchText=Concussion>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCCD52Pty4A>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_55YmbIG9YM

Parents

- Education for parents is strongly recommended as the parents should know what a concussion is and recognize it in their child. This education will allow parents to know what to expect if their child is diagnosed with a concussion.
- Education of parents is easy to incorporate at pre-season parent meetings
- Concussion management protocols can also be reviewed
- Resources can include the two videos used for student education

Protective Equipment

Reference the Safety Precautions and Recommendations in the Football Activity section of the SHSAA annual handbook.

IDENTIFICATION

Identification is the second objective in concussion management. The goal is to optimize the early identification of possible or presumed concussions.

A concussion is suspected when it is recognized that an individual appears to have either experienced an injury or impact that may result in concussion, or is exhibiting unusual behavior that may be the result of a concussion. A concussion is diagnosed by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

The following stakeholders can identify a concussion:

Athletes, including teammates and self-reporting
Coaches
Parents
School staff
Officials
Health care professionals

All suspected concussions will be documented from identification of concussion to return to learn and play http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0111/4460/CATT_concussion-response-tool.pdf

MANAGEMENT

Management is the third objective in concussion management. The goal is to optimize the management and obtain the best outcome for the concussed athletes.

Emergency Action Plan

Any athlete with a suspected head/spinal injury will be assessed using the Emergency Action Plan utilized at the host venue and not moved until deemed safe to do so.

Concussion Action Plan

An athlete suspected of suffering a concussion must be removed from play immediately and not return to activity on the same day. The athlete will be continually monitored for the presence of any “Red Flags” which if present will result in an urgent 911 call.

Each school must provide the coaches with the “Concussion Awareness Fact Sheet”, the “Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool” and the “Concussion Guidelines for the Coaches & Trainers”. These documents will be kept on their person when coaching.

➤ Resources:

- **Concussion Awareness Basics - Fact Sheet**
http://www.parachutecanada.org/downloads/resources/Concussion_Basics.pdf
- **Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool**
<http://www.parachutecanada.org/downloads/resources/CRT5.pdf>
- **Concussion Guidelines for the Coaches & Trainers**
<http://www.parachutecanada.org/downloads/resources/Concussion-Coaches.pdf>

Athletes suspected of a concussion and their parents/caregivers will be provided with the “Concussion Guideline for Athletes” and “Concussion Guidelines for Parents & Caregivers” respectively. These documents discuss concussion and identify the “Red Flags” to be monitored.

➤ Resources:

- **Concussion Guideline for Athletes**
<http://www.parachutecanada.org/downloads/resources/Concussion-Athletes.pdf>
- **Concussion Guidelines for Parents & Caregivers**
<http://www.parachutecanada.org/downloads/resources/Concussion-Parents-Caregivers.pdf>

Athletes must be assessed by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner. Once a concussion diagnosis has been assessed the athlete will progress through a guided concussion management rehabilitation program by a health care practitioner. This will include a progressive guided return to learn process lead by a health care professional. Once the athlete has returned to full time school without symptoms, he/she can progress through the return to play guidelines under the management of a health care professional.

➤ Resources:

- **Return to Learn** <http://www.sportmedab.ca/uploads/files/Documents/ACA/RTL.pdf>
- **Return to Play** <http://www.parachutecanada.org/downloads/resources/return-to-play-guidelines.pdf>

Prior to return to full practice including contact, the athlete must receive clearance from a primary care health care professional with specific training and experience in the assessment and management of sports-related concussion. This will be documented as the final step on the recording tool.

Concussion Awareness Fact Sheet

What is a Concussion

- by definition
 - "Concussion is a brain injury and is defined as a complete pathophysiological process affecting the brain, induced by biomechanical forces"
- practically
 - a disruption of normal brain function caused by some type of outside force
- A concussion is suspected when it is recognized that an individual appears to have either experienced an injury or impact that may result in concussion, or is exhibiting unusual behavior that may be the result of a concussion. A concussion is diagnosed by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

Mechanism of Injury

- direct contact to head
- head contacting other object
- contact anywhere on the body with an impulsive force transferred to the head
- Sometimes the mechanism of injury is not seen by the coach. Any athlete exhibiting the signs or symptoms of a concussion should be reviewed for the possibility of a concussion. The coach may want to ask other players, other coaches, or parents in the stands if they saw the athlete suffer a mechanism of injury that may cause a concussion.

Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

- An athlete may only have one sign or symptom after a contact to the head or body indicating a suspected concussion.
- Some signs and symptoms present early after a blow to the head or body while some develop over time.
- Athletes should be monitored if a concussion is suspected for the onset of delayed signs and symptoms or "Red Flags"

Signs of a Concussion

- loss of consciousness
- balance problems
- unbalanced, uncoordinated movements
- disorientation or confusion
- memory loss
- blank or vacant stare
- acting different than usual

Symptoms of a Concussion

- early symptoms
 - headache
 - pressure in head
 - neck pain
 - nausea
 - dizziness
 - blurred vision
 - balance problems
 - feeling 'slowed down'
 - feeling like 'in a fog'
 - "Don't feel right"
 - confusion
- delayed symptoms
 - light sensitivity
 - nose sensitivity
 - difficulty concentrating
 - difficulty remembering
 - fatigue/low energy
 - drowsiness
 - trouble falling asleep
 - more emotional
 - irritability
 - sadness
 - nervous or anxious

Recognition

- A concussion is suspected when it is recognized that an individual appears to have either experienced an injury or impact that may result in concussion, or is exhibiting unusual behavior that may be the result of a concussion.

Management

Initiate the Emergency Action Plan

- ensure no other major injuries, including a spinal injury, prior to assessing for concussion
 - unconscious
 - weakness or numbness/tingling in extremities
 - severe neck pain
 - athlete does not want to move due to pain

Initiate the Concussion Action Plan

- if it is safe and you are able to do so, remove the athlete from the activity
- monitor the athlete for signs and symptoms of a concussion and document the injury
- monitor the athlete for the presence of “Red Flags” and call 911 if present
 - headache that gets worse
 - are very drowsy or can't be awakened
 - can't recognize people or places
 - have repeated vomiting
 - behave unusually or seem confused, are very irritable
 - have seizures (arms and legs jerk uncontrollably)
 - have weak or numb arms or legs
 - are unsteady on their feet, have slurred speech
- transfer care of the athlete to a parent/guardian and provide them with concussion education documents
- have the athlete follow up with a medical doctor or nurse practitioner
- if diagnosed with a concussion follow a guided progressive return to learn and play protocol under the supervision of a health care professional
- after a concussion diagnosis the athlete will be cleared for full return to competition from a primary care health care professional with specific training and experience in the assessment and management of sports-related concussion