Play Safe Resources: Developing a Concussion Policy
Information for Recreation and Sport Leaders & Organizations
Acknowledgements

This document has been reproduced with permission from the original writer, the Center for Disease and Injury Control (CDC), and adapted for a Canadian perspective. For more information on concussion from the CDC, please visit: www.cdc.gov/concussion.

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Overview

This document is intended to promote discussion and action about concussion prevention and management strategies within sport and recreation organizations in Canada. Injuries, like concussion, are predictable and preventable. This information should not serve as a proxy for legal or healthcare advice.

What do we know?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that can have serious effects on a young, developing brain.\(^1,2\) While most children and teens with concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have concussion symptoms that last for days, weeks, months – even years. These may include changes in how a child or teen think, feel and act, as well as their ability to learn and remember. While rare, a repeat concussion can result in brain swelling or permanent brain damage.\(^6-10\) Concussions should be treated on a case by case basis as no two concussions are the same.

**No such thing as “concussion-proof”**

There is no piece of equipment that can prevent or accurately diagnose a concussion today. Organizations should be careful to avoid promotion of equipment promising a quick solution to this complicated injury. Preventing, diagnosing and managing concussion is a team effort with no simple fix.

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**The facts**

- **Participants who have had a concussion, at any point in their lives, have a greater chance of getting another concussion.**
- **Young children and teens are more likely to get a concussion and can take longer to recover than adults.**\(^3-5\)
- **Recognizing and responding properly to concussion when they first occur can help prevent further injury or even death.**
What can we do?

A concussion can happen at home, school, or at play. So everyone from parents, coaches, sport and recreation leaders and school professionals, can play an important role in learning how to identify signs and symptoms of concussion and knowing what to do if they think a child or teen has experienced one.

Policy efforts

Recently some provinces, school boards, sport leagues and recreation organizations have created concussion policies or action plans in youth related activities. While these efforts show promise, more research is needed to learn if these strategies can help educate leaders, parents and participants and help protect from serious brain injuries.11,12

Provincial legislation

There have been several recent attempts to enact concussion legislation in various provinces but there currently is no provincially mandated protocol. Early drafts of proposed legislation have included steps to return participants to learning and activity following concussion. However, none have included elements necessary to prevent concussion, track injuries or evaluate the ability of such protocols to reduce the incidence of concussion.

Ontario’s Policy Procedure Memorandum 158

In March 2014, the Ontario Ministry of Education issued Policy Procedure Memorandum (PPM) 158 to the education sector. The PPM specifies the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association concussion protocol as part of the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines as the minimum standard. For more information: http://safety.ophea.net
Developing policies & action plans

Concussion prevention and management should be positioned within a broader injury management strategy. As we support children and teens to participate across multiple organizations, sport and recreation organizations should adopt common strategies in their policies or action plans.

Research is needed to learn if including these strategies can help protect children and teens from concussion and other injuries. The following can be considered specifically for concussion, but more appropriately injury risk reduction approach.

Be ready for an emergency

- Create, communicate and practice an emergency medical plan. These plans often include contact information for local emergency medical responders and the location of trauma centres, if available.
- Identify appropriately trained health care professional(s) for games and practices to help assess and manage concussion and other injuries.

Ensure safe play

- Limit contact during practices and games, in particular for younger participants
- Modify rules to limit the use of certain drills or techniques to help reduce the risk of injury.
- Check equipment often. Make sure equipment fits well, is in good condition, is stored properly, and is replaced according to manufacturers’ instructions.
Build the science

- Collect and analyze data from the number of concussions reported by participants during the season or program.
- Study or evaluate changes in concussion knowledge, awareness and action among coaches, parents and participants before and after policies are instituted or changed.

Focus on education

- Post information for all participants in sport and recreation facilities. Posted information may include concussion signs and symptoms, as well as what to do if concussion occurs.
- Host or mandate regular education sessions and invite participants, parents, coaches, officials, leaders, school and healthcare professionals.

Manage return to play

- Provide information on the step-wise process to returning to physical activities and school learning.
- Adopt the International Concussion Consensus graduated return to play protocol and reference Ophea’s Safety Guidelines to align with school process.

International Consensus

Scan here to download the Consensus statement on concussion in sport from the 4th International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich, November 2012.
Additional resources

Concussion Awareness Training Tool  
http://www.cattonline.com/

Parachute’s Active and Safe Concussion Toolkit  
http://www.parachutecanada.org/active-and-safe

Ontario Concussion Portal  

Play Safe Initiative Resources  
http://www.playsafeinitiative.ca/resources

Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation Guidelines for Concussion/mTBI & Persistent Symptoms: Second Edition (Adults)  

Canadian Sport for Life injury Prevention and Physical Literacy Guide for Organizations  

References
