

BOARD POLICY

Policy Section: Board of Directors

Policy Subsection: Sport Development

Policy Title: National Concussion Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

The health and safety of swimmers across the country and at all levels is of utmost importance to Swimming Canada. As such, Swimming Canada recognizes that concussions are potentially serious and dangerous injuries that should be treated in a way that demonstrates the health and safety of swimmers is always a priority.

PURPOSE

This policy is to provide a consistent and effective response to concussions to athletes in the sport no matter where they occur, and is in place to help protect our athletes, at all levels.

It is critical that all stakeholders (including but not limited to athletes, coaches, IST member's, officials, parents, administrators) are provided basic information defining a concussion, potential signs and symptoms, management principles, general guidelines on returning an athlete to sport and helpful resources. With this information, support personnel will have a framework to assist in the early recognition of concussions and an overview of management strategies.

Each Provincial Section (PS) and club has a responsibility to ensure they know all national or provincial policies related to concussion management, and put in place procedures to follow and adopt such policies.

APPLICATION

Swimming Canada has developed the procedure using resources that follow the most relevant scientific recommendations for dealing with concussions, and will expect all stakeholders to rely on and retain expert advice when it comes to incidents of concussions.

Any and all Swimming Canada national events will abide by the guidelines of the following procedure that pertain to recognizing and removing athletes with suspected concussions. PS's are encouraged to adopt or adapt this policy and procedure as they see fit.

RESPONSIBILITY

Body	Action
Swimming Canada	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Dedicate resources that permit the concussion policy to be properly followed2. Mandate that all Swimming Canada national events or training (camp) activities, follow the proper guidelines set out in the procedure

Approved: March 2nd, 2021

NATIONAL CONCUSSION PROCEDURE

A concussion is a disturbance in neurological function caused by a direct or indirect force to the head. This impairment usually resolves rapidly, however in some cases signs and symptoms may evolve over time after injury. It results in a variety of non-specific signs and/or symptoms (examples below) and most often does not involve loss of consciousness. Concussions can potentially cause physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes in athletes. Concussions should be expected in the presence of any of the following signs and/or symptoms post injury.

SYMPTOMS

- Headache
- Pressure in head
- Neck pain
- Nausea or Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Balance difficulties
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Feeling slowed down
- Nervous or anxious
- Feeling like “in a fog”
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering
- Fatigue or low energy
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- Emotional change
- Irritability
- Sadness

SIGNS

- Drowsiness
- Can't be awakened
- Poor memory
- Repeated vomiting
- Confusion
- Seizures
- Weakness/numbness in arms or legs
- Slurred speech
- Balance disturbance
- Blank or vacant stare
- Clutching head

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MANAGEMENT

- If an athlete sustains a significant impact to the head, face, neck or body and demonstrates any of the visual clues or reports any symptoms of a suspected concussion, as described above it is all stakeholders must report their concerns to medical staff.
- Symptoms of concussion can worsen with immediate continued sport participation, so if concussion is suspected, the athlete must be removed from training/competition and evaluated as soon as possible. Even if the athlete becomes asymptomatic, they should not return to sport on the same day of injury.
- Athletes suspected of concussion should not be left alone until medically assessed. Serial monitoring may be required as concussive symptoms can evolve over time.
- More urgent assessment is required if any of the following “Red Flags” occur post injury – worsening headache, repeated vomiting, progressive drowsiness, inability to be awakened, unusual behaviour, seizures, numbness in arms and legs, slurred speech, and neck pain.
- Athletes require clearance to return to training/competition by a sport medicine physician familiar with the management of concussion. Allied health professionals are often included in this decision. Athletes cannot be cleared to return by coaches or paramedical staff.
- Complete rest, both physical and cognitive, is recommended in the first 48 hours post concussion.
- Avoid alcohol, sleeping tablets, ASA, anti-inflammatories and other medications unless medically approved.
- Swimming is considered a low risk sport, with relatively infrequent occurrence of concussion. At this time, baseline preseason screening is not recommended in swimming athletes.
- Remember, it is better to be safe. Consult medical staff if a concussion is suspected.
- Sub symptom threshold aerobic exercise can potentially help with recovery, as well as benefit those athletes who have persistent post concussion symptoms. Exercise graded assessment tests can be used to help concussion experts establish individualized exercise protocols.

RETURN TO SPORT

Concussion recovery varies considerably for athletes and is influenced by many factors. **A sport medicine practitioner with experience in this area should guide Return to Play (RTP) decisions.** Access to a multidisciplinary team may be required. For our younger athletes(<18yrs) less is understood about the long term affects of a concussion on the developing brain, so a more conservative management approach should be taken. A return to school strategy may be required prior to resumption of sport. Return to school and sport protocols often require an individual plan depending on the athlete and sport. Swimming Canada has created a basic template to guide these decisions, found at the end of this document. Information on RTP can also be found on both the Child SCAT 5 and Adult SCAT 5.

It is recognized that concussion management and guidelines currently recommended may change over time as medical science evolves. Current management principles are well outlined in the 5th International Conference on Concussion in Sport, Berlin 2016.

USEFUL RESOURCES

[Parachute Canada](#) – A National organization providing educational material on concussion. Recently developed a Canadian guideline on concussion in sport.

[Sport Concussion Assessment Tool 5](#) – A standardized tool for evaluating concussions. Useful for medical and allied healthcare professionals.

[Child Sport Concussion Assessment Tool 5](#) – A standardized tool for evaluating concussion for ages 5-13 years. Useful for medical and allied healthcare professionals.

[Concussion Recognition Tool 5](#) – Tool to help identify concussion in children, adolescent and adults.

[Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport](#) – From The 5th International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Berlin, October 2016.

SWIMMING CANADA RESOURCES

[Graduated return to sport strategy \(PDF\)](#)

[Graduated Return to school strategy \(PDF\)](#)