



**Policy #54**

**Concussion Policy**

**Approved by Council: March 19, 2014**

---

**Purpose**

Township of Southgate recognizes that the potential for serious injury may occur during public and provided programs. Concussions in sports policies are widely becoming law. Township of Southgate in efforts to protect all participants has developed a programming concussion policy designed to reduce sports concussions and increase awareness of traumatic brain injury.

**Concussion**

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal function of the brain. All concussions are brain injuries.

A concussion can be caused by blow to the head or even a blow to the body alone. The force moves or twists the brain in the skull. It is important to know that loss of consciousness is not required to have a concussion.

Even what appears to be a mild blow to the head or body can cause the brain to suddenly shift or move. This motion can injure and damage brain cells. Research has shown that this damage may take up to 2 weeks to heal, but it can take longer.

**Concussion Common Signs and Symptoms**

Concussion affects people in four areas of function:

1. Physical – This describes how they feel: headache, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, tired and loss of consciousness (which is uncommon in concussion).
2. Thinking – Poor memory and concentration, responds to questions more slowly and asks repetitive questions. Concussion can cause an altered state of awareness and thinking.
3. Emotions- A concussion can make a person more irritable or sad and cause mood swings.
4. Sleep – Concussions frequently cause trouble falling asleep and may wake athletes up overnight, which can make them more fatigued throughout the day.

Everyone involved with athletic activities must be alert for potential injuries during play and be able to recognize signs and symptoms of concussion. While coaches/ volunteers are not expected to make a diagnosis of concussion, it is expected for coaches/ volunteers to be aware that their participants may have a concussion and then hold them out of all activity until they are medically cleared by a healthcare provider. Signs are what can be seen by others, like clumsiness, while symptoms are what the injured player feels, like a headache.

These are some SIGNS concussion (what others can see in an injured athlete):

- . Dazed or stunned appearance
- . Change in the level of consciousness or awareness
- . Confused about assignment
- . Forgets plays
- . Unsure of score, game, opponent
- . Clumsy
- . Answers more slowly than usual
- . Shows behavior changes
- . Loss of consciousness
- . Asks repetitive questions or memory concerns

These are some of the more common SYMPTOMS of concussion (what an injured athlete feels):

- . Headache
- . Nausea
- . Dizzy or unsteady
- . Sensitive to light or noise
- . Feeling mentally foggy
- . Problems with concentration and memory
- . Confused
- . Slow

## **Initial Response: Identification**

Injured participants can exhibit many or just a few of the signs and/or symptoms of concussion. However, if a participant exhibits any signs or symptoms of concussion, the responsibility is simple: remove them from participation. "When in doubt sit them out."

It is important to notify a parent or guardian when a participant is thought to have a concussion. Any participant with a concussion must be seen by an appropriate health care provider before returning to any program or activity.

## **Initial Response: Action**

If you suspect a participant may have a concussion, that individual shall be immediately removed from activity. The injured participant shall be kept out of activity until they are cleared to return by an appropriate health care provider. If the participant has a concussion, that individual shall never be allowed to return to activity that day. Participants with a concussion shall never be allowed to return to activity while they still have symptoms.

A participant with a suspected concussion must be carefully observed throughout the program to be sure they are not feeling worse. Even though the individual is not participating, never send a concussed person away alone and never allow the injured participant to drive home.

Concussion symptoms may even last weeks to months (post-concussion syndrome).

## **Management for Diagnosed Concussion**

Allowing an injured participant to return too quickly increases the risk for repeat concussion. Repeat concussion may cause Second Impact Syndrome. Second Impact Syndrome is a rare phenomenon which happens only in young athletes that causes rapid brain swelling and death. Repeat concussions may increase the chance of long term problems, such as decreased brain function, persistent symptoms and potentially chronic traumatic encephalopathy (a disorder that cause early degeneration of the brain similar to what is seen with Alzheimer's disease).

A major concern with concussion in the youth athletes is that it can interfere with school performance. The signs and symptoms of poor short-term memory, concentration and organization may temporarily turn a good student into a poor student. Parents of youth athlete that has been diagnosed with concussion should inform school.

The school should maintain regular contact with the injured athlete's parents to update progress. Athletes with a concussion should return to full speed academics without accommodations before returning to sports.

Rest is the essential component of concussion treatment. Further contact is to be avoided at all costs due to risk of repeat concussion and Second Impact Syndrome. Physical exertion can also worsen symptoms and prolong concussion recovery- this includes aerobic conditioning and resistance training. Physical activity should not be started without authorization by an appropriate health care provider.

## **Return to Play**

Current recommendations are for a stepwise return to play program. In order to resume activity, the participant must be symptom free and off any pain control or headache medications. The youth athlete should be carrying a full academic load without any significant accommodations. Finally, the participant must have clearance from an appropriate health care provider.

The program described below is a guideline for returning concussed athletes when they are symptom free.

The following program allows for one step per 24 hours. The program allows for a gradual increase in heart rate/physical exertion, coordination, and then allows contact. If symptoms return, the athlete should stop activity and notify their healthcare provider before progressing to the next level.

STEP ONE: About 15 minutes of light exercise: stationary biking or jogging

STEP TWO: More strenuous running and sprinting in the gym or field without equipment

STEP THREE: Begin non-contact drills in full uniform. May also resume weight lifting

STEP FOUR: Full practice with contact

STEP FIVE: Full game clearance

## **PREVENTION**

There is nothing that truly prevents concussion. Education and recognition of concussion are the keys in reducing the risk of problems with concussion. Proper equipment fit and use may reduce the risk of concussion. However, helmets do NOT prevent concussion.

# Chart 1: Steps and Responsibilities in Suspected and Diagnosed Concussions

