

SUNLIGHT WINTER SPORTS CLUB

Concussion Prevention Policy 2022-2023

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a traumatic injury to the brain that alters mental status or changes the way the brain normally works. It is caused by a blow to the head or body that forces the brain to move rapidly inside the skull.

Identifying Concussions

One of the most difficult tasks for a coach is recognizing when concussions have occurred, especially in younger participants so it is imperative that you are always closely watching them and if any of the following signs are observed, or symptoms are reported, that you immediately remove that participant since it may signal that a concussion has been sustained:

- A forceful blow to the head or body that results in rapid movement of the head.
- Any changes in the participants behavior, thinking or physical functioning.

Signs observed by coaching staff	Symptoms reported by the participant
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Appears dazed or stunned● Is confused about assignment or position● Forgets sports plays● Is unsure of game, score or opponent● Moves clumsily● Answers questions slowly● Loses consciousness (even briefly)● Shows behavior or personality changes● Can't recall events prior to hit or fall● Can't recall events after hit or fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Headache or "pressure" in head● Nausea or vomiting● Balance problems or dizziness● Double or blurry vision● Sensitivity to light● Sensitivity to noise● Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy● Concentration or memory problems● Confusion● Does not "feel right"

Important: You can't see a concussion and some participants may not experience and/or report symptoms until hours or days after the injury.

Danger Signs

If concussion symptoms become more severe on the slope or at home you need to consider it a medical emergency. Call 9-1-1 or have the parent/guardian take the child to the emergency room at the closest hospital immediately. Participants who have sustained a concussion can have blood clots form on their brain and squeeze their brain against their skull, which can cause serious damage. The following danger signs represent a medical emergency:

- Headache that does not go away or worsens
- Weakness or numbness
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- One pupil larger than the other
- Loss or decrease in coordination
- Drowsiness or the inability to wake up
- Restlessness or unusual behavior
- Increasing confusion or agitation
- Convulsions or seizures
- Inability to recognize people or places
- Loss of consciousness

Limiting the Risk of Concussions

As a coach, it is impossible to eliminate the chances of concussions occurring, but there are steps you can take to limit the potential risk, which are outlined below.

- **Educate parents** - Take time before the season to go over concussion education with your participants' parents. Parents can reinforce that their children are following safety rules and their child is wearing the proper protective equipment and that it is secured correctly before training days.
- **Educate participants**- Before the season, provide your participants with a list of symptoms they might experience during a practice or game as a result of a concussion. These symptoms, such as dizziness, headaches or other similar conditions, should never be hidden for fear of being pulled out of the training day. The symptoms they experience after a bump or blow to the head should be reported to you right away. Instruct your participants to let you know if they experienced a bump or blow to the head, even if they feel fine, so you can evaluate that participant for a concussion.
- **Wear the right protective gear** - It is also important to teach your participants to wear their protective equipment properly, make sure it fits well, and that it is used every time they play. Properly secured helmets and other gear can often be the difference between a hard hit and serious brain injury. Take a few minutes before each practice or game to check each participant's equipment.

Dealing With a Suspected Concussion

If you think a participant may have sustained a concussion take these steps:

1. **Immediately remove the participant from play.** If you or your coaches recognize any signs or symptoms of a concussion displayed by a participant following a bump or blow to the head immediately remove that participant from the activity.
2. **Inform the athlete's parents.** Following the activity, alert the parents or guardians of the possibility of a concussion and report any signs or symptoms you believe the child has experienced.

Allowing participants back on the slope

Resting

Doctors will always recommend a child who has sustained a concussion get as much rest as possible in the days and weeks following the incident. Rest helps the brain recover and heal itself. Rest is not just referred to as getting plenty of sleep, it also means having the player relax throughout the day. Having the child return to play too soon will cause their brain to divert the energy it needs to heal into energy needed for the activity. Ignoring concussion symptoms or trying to "tough it out" will often make symptoms worse and can prolong a child's recovery. Resting is not just recommended for physical activity but for cognitive activities as well. The child's at-home activities, such as watching television, playing video games or even homework can cause symptoms to remain, reappear or even get worse. For those children who have sustained a concussion, they should consult with their doctor before any at-home activities and school routines are begun.

Returning to SWSC Programs

All children recover differently following a concussion and when it is safe to return to play differs for each child. SWSC Participants must receive written permission from a health care professional with concussion management experience before returning. The Child's doctor should also provide an action plan to get the child ready to compete again. Participants should be symptom free at rest, as well as while doing any physical or cognitive activities, before attempting a comeback.