

## Sample Concussion Prevention Strategies

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Prevention is important, and every school board policy should include strategies for preventing and minimizing the risk of sustaining concussions (and other head injuries) in schools and at off-site school events.

The prevention strategies are organized into the following four sections:

- Teachers/coaches/supervisors
- Students/athletes
- School boards, athletic associations and referee associations
- Parents/guardians

### 1. Teachers/coaches/supervisors

**Prior to the sport season/beginning of the school year** teachers/coaches/supervisors should:

- be knowledgeable of school board's concussion policy and procedures for prevention, recognition, and management (Return to School and Return to Physical Activity Plan);
- be knowledgeable about safe practices in the sport/activity (e.g., the rules and regulations);
- be familiar with the risks of a concussion or other potential injuries associated with the activity/sport and how to minimize those risks;
- be up to date and enforce school board/athletic association/referee rule changes associated with minimizing the risks of concussion;
- be up to date with current body contact skills and techniques (e.g., safe tackling in tackle football), when coaching/supervising contact activities;
- be knowledgeable (when applicable) with the requirements for wearing helmets. (To date there is no evidence that helmets protect against concussions, but helmets reduce the risk of catastrophic head injuries.);
- determine that protective equipment is approved by a recognized equipment standards association (e.g., CSA, NOCSAE), is well maintained, and is visually inspected prior to activity; and
- determine (where applicable) that protective equipment is inspected within approved timelines, by a certified re-conditioner as required by manufacturer (e.g., football helmet).

**During the physical activity/sport season** teachers/coaches/supervisors should:

- teach skills and techniques in the proper progression;
- provide activity/sport-specific concussion information when possible;

- teach and enforce the rules and regulations of the sport/activity during practices and games/competition (particularly those that limit or eliminate body contact, or equipment on body contact);
- reinforce the principles of head injury prevention (e.g., keeping the head up and avoiding collision);
- teach students/athletes involved in body contact activities about:
  - sport-specific rules and regulations of body contact (e.g., no hits to the head); and
  - body contact skills and techniques, and require the successful demonstration of these skills in practice prior to competition.
- discourage others from pressuring injured students/athletes to play/participate;
- demonstrate and role model the ethical values of fair play and respect for opponents;
- encourage students/athletes to follow the rules of play, and to practice fair play;
- use game/match officials in higher-risk interschool sports that are knowledgeable, certified and/or experienced in officiating the sport; and
- inform students about the importance using protective equipment (e.g., helmets, padding, guards) that is properly fitted (as per manufacturer’s guidelines) and properly worn.

## 2. Students/athletes

**Prior to the sport season/beginning of the school year** students/athletes should be informed about:

- concussions, including:
  - definition
  - seriousness of concussions
  - causes
  - signs and symptoms
  - the school’s Identification and management procedures
- the risks of a concussion associated with the activity/sport and how to minimize those risks including sport-specific prevention strategies;
- the importance of respecting the rules of the game and practising fair play (e.g., to follow the rules and ethics of play, to practice good sportsmanship at all times and to respect their opponents and officials);
- the dangers of participating in an activity while experiencing the signs and symptoms of a concussion and potential long-term consequences;
- the importance of:

- immediately informing the teacher/coach/supervisor of any signs or symptoms of a concussion, and removing themselves from the activity;
  - encouraging a teammate with signs or symptoms to remove themselves from the activity and to inform the teacher/coach/supervisor;
  - informing the teacher/coach/supervisor when a classmate/teammate has signs or symptoms of a concussion; and
  - determining that, when students/athletes are permitted to bring their own protective equipment, it is properly fitted (as per manufacturers guidelines), properly worn, in good working order and suitable for personal use.
- the use of helmet when they are required for a sport/activity.
    - Helmets do not prevent concussions. They are designed to protect against skull fractures, major brain injuries (including bleeding into or around the brain), brain contusions and lacerations.
    - Helmets are to be properly fitted (as per manufacturer’s guidelines) and properly worn.

**During the physical activity/sport season** students/athletes should be informed about:

- attending safety clinics/information sessions on concussions for the activity/sport;
- be familiar with the seriousness of concussion and the signs and symptoms of concussion;
- demonstrating safe contact skills during controlled practice sessions prior to competition;
- demonstrating respect for the mutual safety of fellow athletes (e.g., no hits to the head, follow the rules and regulations of the activity);
- wearing properly fitted protective equipment;
- reporting any sign or symptom of a concussion immediately to teacher/coach/supervisor from a hit, fall or collision; and
- encouraging teammates/fellow students to report signs or symptoms of a concussion and to refrain from pressuring injured students/athletes to play.

**Sample strategies/tools to educate students/athletes about concussion prevention information:**

- Hold a pre-season/-activity group/team meeting on concussion education.
- Develop and distribute an information checklist for students/athletes about prevention strategies.
- Post concussion information to inform/reinforce symptoms and signs and what to do if a concussion is suspected.

- Post information posters on prevention of concussions (e.g., encouraging students to report concussion symptoms) in high traffic student areas (e.g., change room/locker area/classroom/gymnasium).
- Implement concussion classroom learning modules aligned with the curriculum expectations.
- Distribute concussion fact sheets (prevention, signs and symptoms) for each student/athlete on school teams.
- Distribute and collect completed student concussion contract or pledge (signed by student/athlete and parents/guardians).

*Students/athletes who are absent for safety lessons (e.g. information, skills, techniques) must be provided with the information and training prior to the next activity sessions.*

### **3. School boards, athletic associations and referee associations**

**Prior to the sport season/beginning of the school year** school boards, athletic associations and referee associations should:

- consider rule changes to the activity, to reduce the head injury incidence or severity, where a clear-cut mechanism is implicated in a particular sport; and
- consider rule enforcement to minimize the risk of head injuries.

### **4. Parents/guardians**

**Prior to the sport season/beginning of the school year** parents/guardians to be informed of:

- risks and possible mitigations of the activity/sport;
- dangers of participating with a concussion;
- signs and symptoms of a concussion;
- school's identification, and management procedures;
- sport-specific concussion prevention strategies;
- importance of encouraging the ethical values of fair play and respect for opponents; and
- importance of determining that, when students/athletes are permitted to bring their own protective equipment, it is properly fitted (as per manufacturer's guidelines), properly worn, in good working order and suitable for personal use.

## **RESOURCES**

- Parachute: [www.parachutecanada.org/concussion](http://www.parachutecanada.org/concussion)
- Ontario portal: [www.Ontario.ca/concussions](http://www.Ontario.ca/concussions)