

Special Olympics Kansas Concussion Policy

In recent years, medical science has determined that concussions are among the most dangerous sports injuries. Athletes in just about any sports venue are at risk. Concussions received by participants in sports activities are an ongoing concern at all levels. Recent interest and research in this area has prompted reevaluations of treatment and management recommendations from the youth to the professional level. Numerous agencies and associations throughout the United States responsible for developing guidelines addressing the management of concussion in sports have developed or revised their guidelines for concussion management. Special Olympics Kansas takes concussions seriously and wants to ensure the safety of each athlete. In the interest of protecting our athletes, we have developed protocols for dealing with this serious injury.

The Concussion Policy and Management Protocols have been set forth by the Board of Directors with the welfare of the athlete in mind.

Concussion Policy

Any athlete who suffers or is suspected of having suffered a concussion or head injury during a sport competition or practice session, (1) must be immediately removed from the competition or practice; and (2) may not again participate in competition and/or practice until a health care provider has evaluated the athlete and provided a written clearance for the athlete to return to competition and/or practice. The athlete may not be cleared for practice and/or competition the same day the concussion sign, symptom or behavior was observed.

For purposes of this policy, the health care provider is “a person licensed by the state board of healing arts to practice medicine and surgery.” This means a Medical Doctor (MD) or a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) currently licensed in Kansas.

| SIGNS OBSERVED BY OTHERS | SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appears dazed or stunned <input type="checkbox"/> Is confused about assignment <input type="checkbox"/> Forgets plays <input type="checkbox"/> Is unsure of game, score, or opponent <input type="checkbox"/> Moves clumsily <input type="checkbox"/> Answers questions slowly <input type="checkbox"/> Loses consciousness <input type="checkbox"/> Shows behavior or personality changes <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot recall events prior to hit <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot recall events after hit | <input type="checkbox"/> Headache <input type="checkbox"/> Nausea <input type="checkbox"/> Balance problems or dizziness <input type="checkbox"/> Double or fuzzy vision <input type="checkbox"/> Sensitivity to light or noise <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling sluggish <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling foggy or groggy <input type="checkbox"/> Concentration or memory problems <input type="checkbox"/> Confusion |

Signs and symptoms are not limited to those included above.

Required Training and Timeline

All Coaches are required to complete concussion awareness training at least once every three years, which is available at <https://learn.specialolympics.org> and submit the certificate of completion to Special Olympics Kansas. Any concussion awareness training other than the one provided by Special Olympics at the link above must be approved by SOI.

Management Protocol

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (sometimes abbreviated as TBI), which can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. A concussion occurs when the brain strikes against the skull or is shifted in a way that causes the brain to not function properly. This causes the brain to react much like when your skin is struck, causing a bruise, but to be clear, a concussion is NOT a bruise to the brain. Concussions are not limited to bumps or blows to the head; they can also occur from a fall or a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth.





Health care professionals may describe a concussion as a “mild” brain injury because concussions are usually not life-threatening. Even so, their effects can be serious. Additionally, just like other physical injuries, immediate identification and treatment is critical to ensure full recovery.

Most people with a concussion recover quickly and fully. But for some people, symptoms can last for days, weeks, or longer. In general, recovery may be slower among older adults, young children, and teens. Those who have had a concussion in the past are also at risk of having another one and may find that it takes longer to recover if they have another concussion.

What are the Symptoms of a Concussion?

Everyone is different and your body’s reaction to a bump, jolt or blow may be quite different than someone else’s reaction. Some symptoms may appear right away, while others may not be noticed for days or months after the injury. Reactions to a bump, jolt, or blow can encompass four different processes of the brain; (1) thought processes, including reasoning and memory; physical processes to include manifestations of pain; emotional processes; and mood and sleep processes.

Symptoms of concussion usually fall into four categories, review the chart below:

|  Thinking/ Remembering |  Physical |  Emotional/ Mood |  Sleep |
|--|---|--|--|
| Difficulty thinking clearly | Headache Fuzzy or blurry vision | Irritability | Sleeping more than usual |
| Feeling slowed down | Nausea or vomiting (early on) Dizziness | Sadness | Sleep less than usual |

| | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Difficulty concentrating | Sensitivity to noise or light Balance problems | Increased outpouring of emotions | Trouble falling asleep |
| Difficulty remembering new information | Feeling tired, having no energy | Nervousness or anxiety | |

(Chart based on information from The Center for Disease Control www.cdc.gov)

The signs and symptoms of a concussion can be difficult to sort out. Early on, problems may be missed by the person with the concussion, family members, or doctors. People may look fine even though they are acting or feeling differently. Sometimes, people do not recognize or admit that they are having problems. Others may not understand why they are having problems and what their problems really are, which can make them nervous and upset. This is especially true for people with intellectual disabilities. Sometimes the injured person is unable to articulate the problems that he or she is having. Sometimes, they are incapable of understanding that the issues that they are dealing with in their head were caused by contact which may not have even impacted the head. Concussions can have different effects on people of different ages.

Danger Signs in Adults

Symptoms of a concussion in adults can manifest themselves in any or all of the following symptoms:

- Headache that gets worse and does not go away.
- Weakness, numbness or decreased coordination.
- Repeated vomiting or nausea.
- Slurred speech.

Some extreme symptoms include:

- Look very drowsy or cannot be awakened.
- Have one pupil (the black part in the middle of the eye) larger than the other.
- Have convulsions or seizures.
- Cannot recognize people or places.
- Are getting more and more confused, restless, or agitated.
- Have unusual behavior.
- Lose consciousness (*a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously and the person should be carefully monitored*).

When Do We Need to Seek Immediate Medical Attention?

If a person is exhibiting any of the signs listed above, the person needs to see their doctor or health care professional right away. As a coach or volunteer, if you observe any of the signs

listed above, you should insist that the individual be seen by a health care professional as soon as possible.

In the event that you witness an athlete showing any of the extreme symptoms listed above, it is imperative that the affected person be transported to a hospital emergency room IMMEDIATELY. Do not try to move an unconscious athlete. Dial 911 and state the emergency. After calling for emergency medical help, please contact a member of the Special Olympics Kansas staff.

Danger Signs in Children

Younger athletes, those under age twelve, are far less able to tolerate concussions than older athletes. Should a child below the age of twelve sustain an injury that has any of the symptoms listed below, ensure that the child receives immediate medical attention. If a qualified medical professional is not immediately available, take the child to an emergency room right away. If they lose consciousness, call 911. Do not attempt to move a child that is unconscious. Remember, anytime a younger athlete is in a situation where they received a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body, and:

- Have any of the danger signs for adults listed above;
- Will not stop crying and cannot be consoled; or
- Will not nurse or eat.

Ensure that they get prompt medical attention.

How Does One Recover From a Concussion?

Rest is very important after a concussion because it helps the brain to heal. Ignoring your symptoms and trying to “tough it out” often makes symptoms worse. Be patient because healing takes time. Only when your symptoms have reduced significantly, in consultation with your doctor, should you slowly and gradually return to your daily activities, such as work or school. If your symptoms come back or you get new symptoms as you become more active, this is a sign that you are pushing yourself too hard. Stop these activities and take more time to rest and recover. As the days go by, you can expect to gradually feel better. Tips to help you get better:

- Get plenty of sleep at night, and rest during the day.
- Avoid activities that are physically demanding (e.g., sports, heavy housecleaning, working) or require a lot of concentration (e.g., sustained computer use, video games).
- Ask your doctor when you can safely drive a car, ride a bike, or operate heavy equipment
- Do not drink alcohol. Alcohol and other drugs may slow your recovery and put you at risk of further injury.

There are many people who can help as you recover from a concussion. You do not have to do it alone. Keep talking with your doctor, family members, and loved ones about how you are feeling, both physically and emotionally. If you do not think you are getting better, tell your doctor.

A concussion is type of traumatic brain injury that interferes with normal function of the brain. It occurs when the brain is rocked back and forth or twisted inside the skull as a result of a blow to the head or body. What may appear to be only a mild jolt or blow to the head or body can result in a concussion.

The understanding of sports-related concussion has evolved dramatically in recent years. We now know that young athletes are particularly vulnerable to the effects of a concussion

Protocols for Dealing with Potential Concussions at SOKS events

Anytime that an athlete takes a blow to the head which causes the stoppage of play, a coach or official needs to make an assessment. If the athlete does not immediately recover from a blow, that is, if they lay on the ground or seem to be having difficulties getting their bearings, the coach or official should **immediately remove from play any athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury. It is far more important that the athlete be sheltered from further injury than to risk further damage by continuing to play.**

Any coach, volunteer, or Special Olympics Official who observes or is made aware of an incident involving a potential concussion or head injury shall **immediately remove** from physical participation the athlete who is suspected of sustaining a concussion or head injury during the athletic activity (practice of competition).

The athlete suspected of suspected of suffering a concussion or head injury is not allowed to return to any Special Olympics Kansas activity until a health care provider has evaluated the athlete and provided a written clearance for the athlete to return to competition and/or practice. Written clearance signed by a currently licensed in Kansas Medical Doctor (MD) or a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) must be forwarded to Special Olympics Kansas Headquarters office to be maintained by the organization in the athletes' permanent file.

Should an athlete suffer a second diagnosed concussion, Special Olympics Kansas recommends that the athlete not participate in physical competition for one year after the date of the second concussion. Athletes with rights to self-determination, or their legal guardian shall sign a waiver that releases Special Olympics Kansas from any legal obligation and/or liability related to the athlete's prior concussion(s) prior to the athlete being allowed to return.

Athletes who have suffered more than two diagnosed concussions will be encouraged to seriously consider refraining from future competitions. Those wishing to return shall be evaluated and cleared by an appropriate health care professional no sooner than the one-year anniversary of the most recent diagnosed concussion.