

CONCUSSION FACT SHEET

This fact sheet provides a description of the symptoms and proper ways to handle the occurrence of a concussion during Church-sponsored sports or physical activities. Concussions may occur in any sport or physical activity, but are most common in contact and collision activities.

WHAT IS A TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI) OR CONCUSSION?

A TBI is a disruption of normal brain function caused by a hit, bump, or jolt to the head, although not all blows to the head will result in a TBI. A hit to the head can sometimes cause the brain to bounce around in the skull, potentially causing cells to be stretched or damaged, which may ultimately lead to a chemical imbalance in the brain and various degrees of impairment. Severe TBIs may result in unconsciousness or memory loss for extended periods of time. Mild TBIs, more commonly called concussions, are usually characterized by a less severe change in consciousness or mental status.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Concussions can affect the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of individuals. These injuries are capable of altering individuals' sleep patterns, as well as their abilities to retain information. Some symptoms are apparent immediately after the concussion, while others may appear days or even months later. People may react differently and show a variety of symptoms when experiencing a concussion. When symptoms become persistent and last beyond the expected recovery time, it is called Post-Concussion Syndrome.

Symptoms may include:

- Difficulty thinking clearly or concentrating
- Difficulty remembering new information
- A slower thought process
- Headache and/or blurry vision
- Nausea and dizziness
- Sensitivity to noise or light
- Balance problems
- Feeling fatigued or having no energy
- Being irritable, anxious, nervous, or sad
- Being more emotional than usual
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Having trouble falling asleep

Because concussions can lead to blood clots that push the brain against the skull, certain symptoms can indicate the need for immediate medical attention after a hit to the head. These symptoms may include:

- Persistent headache
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Looking drowsy or not being able to wake up
- Having one pupil larger than the other
- Having convulsions or seizures
- Not recognizing people or places
- Confusion or agitation
- Unusual behavior
- Losing consciousness

Symptoms in children may also include:

- Persistent crying and being inconsolable
- Not nursing or eating

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE EXPERIENCES A CONCUSSION

If you suspect that a participant has experienced a concussion from a fall or hit to the head, remove him or her from the activity for further examination. Seek medical attention immediately. The severity of the concussion should not be determined by a leader or by a parent, but by a health care provider who is knowledgeable about concussions. The health care provider may conduct a neurological and cognitive evaluation to determine if the injured individual needs to see a specialist.

If someone experiences a concussion during Church-sponsored sports or other physical activities, that individual should not be permitted to continue playing until he or she has seen an appropriate health care provider. It is helpful to record information regarding the circumstances of the injury, such as:

- Cause of injury and force of the blow to the head
- Possible loss of consciousness, and for how long
- Memory loss immediately after the injury
- Occurrence of seizures immediately after the injury
- Number of previous concussions

Recovery is often a slow process that requires patience while the brain heals. Immediately after the incident the concussed individual should rest and refrain from activities that put strain on the brain such as reading and looking at screens. Every concussion differs in severity. It is important to follow the counsel of the health care provider or specialist, as they will tell the individual when it is safe to participate in future activities.

HOW TO PREVENT CONCUSSIONS

Safety is an important part of Church-sponsored sports and physical activities. Consider all appropriate safety rules and the use of proper safety equipment. Participants should also be aware of the risks involved in certain activities and encouraged to avoid contact that could result in a concussion.

For more information about this topic, call the Risk Management Division:

- 1-801-240-4049
- 1-800-453-3860, ext. 2-4049 (toll free in the United States and Canada)

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