

**Minimizing the risk of Concussions**

Education is the prime factor in supporting the prevention of concussion. Any time a student/athlete is involved in physical activity; there is a chance of sustaining a concussion. Therefore it is important to take a preventative approach when dealing with concussions and to mitigate the severity of the injury.

Prior to any activity school staff (includes administration staff, teaching staff, support staff, coaches, volunteers, etc.) must meet with participants to provide instruction on strategies for preventing and minimizing the risk of sustaining a concussion and other head injuries. A sample of strategies are listed below; however school staff should refer to Halton Catholic District School Board Safety Guidelines relevant to sport/activity (e.g. Curricular Module 1, Intramural Module 2, Interschool Module 3).

**Information for Students:**

1. Attend the Safety Clinic information session on Concussion provided for the activity sport in which they are participating.
2. The definition and causes of a concussion, signs and symptoms, and dangers of participating in an activity while experiencing the signs and symptoms of a concussion
3. The risks associated with the activity/sport for a concussion and how to minimize those risks
4. The importance of immediately informing the teacher/coach of any signs or symptoms of a concussion, and removing themselves from the activity, encouraging teammates to do the same, and, discouragement from pressuring injured students/athletes to play/participate.
5. The importance of informing the teacher/coach when a classmate/teammate indicates signs/symptoms of a concussion.
6. The importance of respecting the rules of the game and practising fair play
7. Minimizing the risk of concussion by adhering to the safety rules of the sport/ activity and using effective strategies to maximize safe participation ( e.g. effective positioning in soccer, avoiding over-crowding when using the playground equipment)
8. The importance of wearing protective equipment that is properly fitted, well maintained, worn correctly, adheres to safety standards (e.g. CSA approved) and is replaced when damaged or past its expiry date (e.g. Football helmets)
9. Where helmets are worn, inform students that there is no such thing as a concussion-proof helmet. Helmets are designed to prevent major brain injuries such as bruises to the brain, blood clots, facial injury and skull fractures. However, helmets do not prevent all concussions.

**Strategies for school staff to minimize the risk of concussion:**

1. Be knowledgeable of the HCDSB's concussion policy and procedure/protocol for prevention, identification, and management (return to learn and return to physical activity).
2. Follow the HCDSB sport specific safety guidelines.
3. Enforce fair play and player code of conduct
4. Skills and techniques must be taught in proper progression and be up to date with current body contact skills and techniques (e.g. safe tackling in tackle football), when coaching/supervising contact activities.
5. Athletes must be instructed and trained in the appropriate body contact skills and techniques of the activity/sport prior to contact practice/game situations (i.e. preseason information, in season practice information/direction, successful demonstration of skills in practice prior to competition).

6. Athletes who are absent for concussion safety lessons must be provided with the information prior to the next activity sessions
7. The rules of the sport must be enforced. Emphasize the principles of head-injury prevention (e.g., keeping the head up and avoiding collision, eliminating all hits to the head, eliminate all hits from behind).
8. Check protective equipment is approved by a recognized Equipment Standards Association (e.g., CSA, NOCSAE) and is visually inspected prior to activity and well maintained
9. Check (where applicable) that protective equipment is inspected by a certified re-conditioner as required by manufacturer (e.g., helmets), athletes and parent/guardians must be informed of the importance of determining that the equipment is in good working order and suitable for personal use
10. Document safety lessons (e.g., date, time, brief content, student attendance).
11. Support athletes recovering from concussion to return to play **ONLY** when they feel they are ready and with doctor/ nurse practitioner consent.
12. Athletic Associations, that govern the co-curricular activities, are knowledgeable of the Concussion Protocols of the member Boards.
13. Referee Associations, that officiate the co-curricular activities, are knowledgeable of the Concussion Protocols of the member Boards.

**Information for Parents/Guardians:**

For those whose child/ward participates in higher risk sports, but not exclusive to them, should be aware of:

1. The HCDSB has a comprehensive identification, diagnosis and management procedure/protocol.
2. Risks and possible mitigations of the activity/sport, as outlined in the Permission to Participate forms.
3. Signs and Symptoms of concussion and the dangers of participating with a concussion.

**Action Strategy Examples:**

- Hold a preseason/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);
- Development of an information flyer for parents/guardians

Many resources are available at [www.thinkfirst.ca](http://www.thinkfirst.ca) including videos and Concussion Cards. An excellent video “Concussions 101, a Primer for Kids and Parents” by Dr. Mike Evans is available on YouTube