



It is Special Olympics' intent to take steps to help ensure the health and safety of all Special Olympics participants. All Special Olympics participants should remember that safety comes first and should take reasonable steps the help minimize the risks for concussion and other serious brain injuries.

“When in doubt, sit them out.”

What is a Concussion?

All concussions are serious. A concussion is a brain injury that:

- Is caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head or body
- Can change the way a brain normally works
- Can happen to anyone at anytime, not only during sport activities
- Can occur even if there was no loss of consciousness
- Can be serious, even from the slightest ding or “getting their bell rung”

Most individuals with a concussion get better, but it is very important to allow time for the brain to heal.

Signs/Symptoms of a Concussion

Concussions cannot be seen; however in a potentially concussed person one or more of the symptoms listed below may become apparent and/or the person “doesn’t feel right” soon after, a few days after or even weeks after the injury. 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.

Symptoms of concussion usually fall into four categories:

 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	More emotional	Trouble falling asleep
Difficulty remembering new information	Feeling tired, having no energy	Nervousness or anxiety	

Your role in identifying/monitoring Concussion symptoms

It is often those closest to the individuals that will notice a change in behavior. The signs and symptoms of a concussion can be difficult to sort out. People may look fine even though they are acting or feeling differently. Some of these symptoms may appear right away, while others may not be noticed for days or months after the injury, or until the person starts resuming their everyday life and more demands are placed upon them.

By 2016 it will be required that all Special Olympic coaches complete a Concussion Awareness and Safety Recognition Training Course. For your personal benefit and ability to understand and know the signs/symptoms of a concussion, we highly recommend that you take the course as well. It is a FREE online video and can be accessed here: <http://nfhslearn.com/courses/38000>

What should you do if you think your athlete has a concussion?

- If you suspect that an athlete has a concussion seek medical attention.
- Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself.
- Keep your athlete out of play until a qualified health care professional, experienced in evaluating for concussions, says s/he is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.
- Rest is the key to helping an athlete recover from a concussion.
- Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games, may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse.
- Remember that after a concussion returning to sports and school/work is a gradual process that should be carefully managed and monitored by a health care professional.

Danger Signs of Concussion – SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION

In rare cases, a dangerous blood clot may form on the brain in a person with a concussion and crowd the brain against the skull. Contact your health care professional or emergency department right away if any of the following are present:

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

Return to Practice/Competition

A participant who has been removed from practice, play or competition due to a suspected concussion may not participate in Special Olympics sports activities until either of the following occurs:

1. At least seven (7) consecutive days have passed since the participant was removed from play and a currently licensed, qualified medical professional provides written clearance for the participant to return to practice, play and competition
2. A currently licensed, qualified medical professional determines that the participant did not suffer a concussion and provides written clearance for the participant to return to practice play immediately.

Written clearance in either of the scenarios above shall become a **permanent record**.

Additional information can be found by visiting: <http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/>