

CONCUSSION POLICY AND RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL

Ringette Canada is committed to ensuring the safety of everyone participating in the sport of ringette. Ringette Canada recognizes the increased awareness of Concussions and their long-term effect and believes that prevention of Concussions is paramount to protecting the health and safety of our Participants.

Definitions

1. The following terms pertain to this Policy:
 - 1.1. “Activity” means all Ringette Canada, PTSO and affiliated association/club business and activities;
 - 1.2. “*Concussion*” – A brain injury that can result in an alteration in thinking and behaviour as a result of a physical impact to the head, neck, face or body.
 - 1.3. “Participants”: Individuals associated with Ringette Canada activities including but not limited to coaches, athletes, volunteers, and officials;
 - 1.4. “Member” – As defined in By-Law #7;
 - 1.5. “PTSO or Provincial or Territorial Sport Organization” refers to a provincial or territorial organization Member that is responsible for the management of ringette within its provincial or territorial boundaries;
 - 1.6. “*Suspected Concussion*” – Any time a Participant appears to have either experienced an injury or impact that may result in a concussion, or is exhibiting one or more signs or symptoms that could be the result of concussion.

Application

1. This Policy applies to Ringette Canada, its Members, and Participants. It applies at all times wherever an Activity takes place, including Ringette Canada, PTSO or affiliated association/club workplaces as well as external locations in Canada and abroad and includes all events and activities sanctioned by Ringette Canada or the PTSO.

2. This Policy recognizes that jurisdictions across Canada have legislation that governs the management of concussions accordingly. Government legislation may supersede this Policy. Failure to abide by this Policy and the protocols contained in the Ringette Canada Concussion Management Guidelines may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Ringette Canada Conduct Policy or the conduct policies of the applicable PTSO.

Purpose

3. The purpose of this Policy is to provide the framework to create a safe and positive sport environment through education and training, and by making Ringette Canada Members and Participants aware of ringette-specific concussion awareness resources to assist in recognizing and managing a concussion injury.

Concussion Awareness and Prevention

4. The risk of a Concussion occurring may be reduced by the proper implementation of prevention strategies. Ringette Canada, will make the following concussion awareness resources available on its public website:
 - 4.1. Ringette Canada Concussion Policy
 - 4.2. Ringette Canada Concussion Management Guidelines including:
 - 4.2.1.1. Head Injury Recognition (Concussion Recognition Tool – CRT5)
 - 4.2.1.2. Ringette Canada Removal-from-sport Protocol
 - 4.2.1.3. Ringette Canada Return-to-sport Protocols including, as appropriate:
 - 4.2.1.3.1. Club Environment
 - 4.2.1.3.2. Short-term Centralized Training (e.g., National or Provincial teams)
 - 4.2.1.3.3. Full-time Training Group (e.g., Senior National Team)
 - 4.3. *Concussion awareness and prevention* – Ringette Canada will make concussion awareness resources available on its public website, including this Policy, the *Concussion Management Guidelines, educational information for parents and players, as well as a link to our Concussion Education e-learning course.*
 - 4.4. *Safe participation environment* – Ringette Canada and PTSO-sanctioned event and activity venues will be properly prepared and free of hazards.
 - 4.5. *Fair play and respect for opponents* – These ethical values will be encouraged in all activities.

Concussion Recognition and Management Procedures

5. During all events, competitions, and practices, Participants must refer to the *Concussion Management Guidelines* and use their best efforts to remain aware of incidents that may cause a Concussion and recognize the signs and symptoms of a Suspected Concussion. Signs and symptoms may appear immediately after the injury or within hours or days of the injury and may be different for everyone. For reference, some common signs and symptoms are included in the *Concussion Incidence and Response* section of the *Concussion Management Guidelines*.

Governance

Ringette Canada Responsibilities

6. Ringette Canada will:
 - a. Participate in multi-disciplinary working groups on sport-related concussions;
 - b. Develop and maintain a Concussion Policy and related Concussion Management Guidelines including Removal-from-sport and Return-to-sport protocols;
 - c. Develop and maintain a system for collecting and analyzing concussion injury data;
 - d. Obtain and maintain records of sport-related concussions for National and National Ringette League (NRL) teams, including medical clearance letters for Athlete;
 - e. In collaboration with the PTOSs, assess data for changes in concussion rates over the seasons and identify, if possible, elements of training or competition that put Athletes in a position of high risk for concussion injury and make recommendations to address;
 - f. Develop or communicate concussion awareness resources for Participants;

- g. Provide access to concussion education for Members, and Participants; and
- h. Receive and investigate complaints of any breach of the Ringette Canada Concussion Policy and Concussion Management Guidelines and, where appropriate, determine an appropriate disciplinary response

PTSO Responsibilities

- 7. PTSOs should:
 - a. Adopt the Ringette Canada Concussion Policy and related protocols, which may include an appendix, if necessary, to comply with provincial or territorial legislation and regulations;
 - b. Report annually to Ringette Canada on sport-related concussions;
 - c. Obtain and maintain records of sport-related concussions for provincial or territorial teams;
 - d. In collaboration with Ringette Canada and other PTSOs, assess data for changes in concussion rates over seasons and identify and, if possible, make recommendations with respect to those training or routine elements that put Athletes in a position of high risk for concussion injury;
 - e. In collaboration with Ringette Canada and other PTSOs, develop or communicate concussion awareness resources for Coaches, Officials, Athletes and other Participants; and
 - f. Receive and investigate complaints of any breach of the Ringette Canada Concussion Policy and Concussion Management Protocol and, where appropriate, determine an appropriate disciplinary response.

Removal from Play

- 8. In the event of a Suspected Concussion, the Participant should be immediately removed from play by designated personnel and not be allowed to return to play that day.
- 9. The Participant should not be left alone and should be seen by a physician or other licensed healthcare provider as soon as possible.
- 10. A Participant who has been removed from play due to a Suspected Concussion must not return to play until the Participant has been medically assessed by a physician or other licensed healthcare provider, even if the symptoms of the Concussion appear to resolve.

Return to Play

11. A Participant with any signs or symptoms of a Suspected Concussion will not be permitted to return to play until the Participant has been assessed by a physician.
12. Prior to returning to play, the Participant must consult and follow the steps outlined in the Return to Play section of the *Concussion Management Guidelines* to return to play safely.
13. Student Participants must return to school regularly at their pre-injury level of performance and other Participants must have returned to their normal education or work prior to making a full return to play (i.e., stage 5 and 6 of Return to Play(see Appendix I)).

Medical Clearance and Monitoring

14. In following the Return to Play section of the *Concussion Management Guidelines*, the Participant is required to consult a physician prior to returning to play.
15. Once the Participant has been given medical clearance by a physician a copy of the medical clearance letter must be provided to Ringette Canada for monitoring.

Coach / Administrator / Supervisor Responsibilities

16. All members of the Ringette Canada community (including coaches, trainers, officials, and even parents) must be familiar with their responsibilities under the [Concussion Management Guidelines](#). The Guidelines explain how to recognize signs of a Suspected Concussion, the initial actions that should be taken, the return to play protocols and the reporting responsibilities to Ringette Canada.
17. Every Suspected Concussion incident must be reported to Ringette Canada.

Review

18. This Policy and the *Concussion Management Guidelines* are subject to review at least once every three years.

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Date of last review: November 2023

The publication of Ringette Canada policies will be in the English and French languages. In the case of conflicting interpretations, the English version will prevail.

Appendix I – Return to Play Protocol

Returning to Play:

Signs and symptoms of concussion may develop over time following a brain injury.¹ The Participant with a suspected concussion must consult a medical doctor or nurse practitioner before returning to play.

The Participant and the Participant's parent/guardian (if applicable) should be directed to the following guidelines:

- a) If no concussion is diagnosed by a physician: the Participant may return to physical activities accompanied by a Medical Assessment Letter confirming that the Participant has not been diagnosed with a concussion and can resume full participation.
- b) If a concussion is diagnosed by a physician or other licensed healthcare provider: the Participant can only gradually return to physical activities by following the steps outlined in the chart below and/or as directed by a physician.
- c) The Participant should be monitored regularly for the return of any signs and/or symptoms of concussion. If signs and/or symptoms return, the Participant must consult with a physician or other licensed healthcare provider.
- d) Return to Play Strategy:
 - a. Each stage must take a minimum of 24 hours and the length of time needed to complete each stage will vary based on the severity of the concussion.
 - b. Move forward to the next stage when activities are tolerated without new or worsening symptoms.
 - c. If symptoms reappear, return to the previous stage for at least 24 hours.
 - d. Student Participants must return to school regularly at their pre-injury level of performance and other Participants must have returned to their normal education or work prior to making a full return to play (i.e., stage 5 and 6 of Return to Play).

¹ Lovell MR, Collins MW, Iverson GL, Johnston KM, Bradley JP. Grade 1 or "ding" concussions in high school athletes. *Am J Sports Med.* 2004 Jan-Feb;32(1):47-54.

| Stage | Aim | Activity | Stage Goal |
|--|-----------------------------|---|---|
| 0 | Rest | 24-48 hours of physical and cognitive rest | Rest |
| <i>Proceed to step 1 only when symptoms are gone.</i> | | | |
| 1 | Symptom-limiting activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily activities that do not provoke symptoms. • Monitor for symptoms and signs. | Gradual re-introduction of work/school activities |
| 2 | Light aerobic activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking or stationary cycling at slow to medium pace • No resistance training • Light intensity jogging or stationary cycling for 15-20 minutes at sub-symptom threshold intensity | Increase heart rate |
| 3 | Sport-specific exercise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training activities such as skating drills. • No head impact activities or resistance training. • Moderate intensity jogging for 30-60 minutes • Low to moderate impact passing and shooting drills | Add movement |
| 4 | Non-contact training drills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harder training drills without contact with teammates. • May start progressive resistance training | Exercise, coordination and increased thinking |
| Repeat medical assessment and clearance with second Concussion Assessment Medical Report Form | | | |
| 5 | Full contact practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical clearance required prior to engaging in full contact activity • Participation in full practice without activity restriction | Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff |
| 6 | Return to sport | Normal game play | |

Once the Participant has been given medical clearance, the coach, administrator and/or supervisor will be required to forward a copy of the Concussion Assessment Medical Report Form to Ringette Canada (ringette@ringette.ca) for retention.