

# GCC Policy: Concussion Prevention and Management

As adopted by the GCC Board of Directors 28 July 2015

Green Communities Canada (GCC) takes seriously the health and well-being of its directors, staff, volunteers, contractors, consultants and all participants in its various programs.

GCC recognizes the seriousness of concussions, the need to prevent head injuries and to identify and manage concussions to ensure health and well-being.

GCC will act in accordance with the Concussion Guidelines as laid out by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport<sup>1</sup>.

All GCC employees, volunteers, contractors and consultants will be required to read this policy and sign-off indicating they understand it and will adhere to it.

## Definition<sup>2</sup>:

A concussion:

- is a brain injury that causes changes in how the brain functions, leading to symptoms that can be physical (e.g., headache, dizziness), cognitive (e.g., difficulty concentrating or remembering), emotional/behavioural (e.g., depression, irritability) and/or related to sleep (e.g., drowsiness, difficulty falling asleep);
- may be caused either by a direct blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull;
- can occur even if there has been no loss of consciousness (in fact most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness); and,
- cannot normally be seen on X-rays, standard CT scans or MRIs.

## Common signs and symptoms of a concussion<sup>3</sup>:

Following a blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head, a concussion should be suspected in the presence of any one or more of the following signs or symptoms:

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/concussions/docs/mtcs\\_concussion\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/concussions/docs/mtcs_concussion_guide_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport CONCUSSION GUIDELINES

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### **Possible Signs Observed**

*A sign is something that will be observed by another person (e.g., parent/guardian, teacher, coach, supervisor, peer).*

#### **Physical**

- vomiting
- slurred speech
- slowed reaction time
- poor coordination or balance
- blank stare/glassy-eyed/dazed or vacant look
- decreased playing ability
- loss of consciousness or lack of responsiveness
- lying motionless on the ground or slow to get up
- amnesia
- seizure or convulsion
- grabbing or clutching of head

#### **Cognitive**

- difficulty concentrating
- easily distracted
- general confusion
- cannot remember things that happened before and after the injury
- does not know time, date, place, class, type of activity in which he/she was participating
- slowed reaction time (e.g., answering questions or following directions)

#### **Emotional/Behavioural**

- strange or inappropriate emotions (e.g., laughing, crying, getting angry easily)

#### **Sleep Disturbance**

- drowsiness
- insomnia

### **Possible Symptoms Reported**

*A symptom is something an individual will feel/report.*

#### **Physical**

- headache
- pressure in head
- neck pain
- feeling off/not right
- ringing in the ears
- seeing double or blurry/loss of vision
- seeing stars, flashing lights
- pain at physical site of injury
- nausea/stomach ache/pain
- balance problems or dizziness
- fatigue or feeling tired
- sensitivity to light or noise

#### **Cognitive**

- difficulty concentrating or remembering
- slowed down, fatigue or low energy
- dazed or in a fog

#### **Emotional/Behavioural**

- irritable, sad, more emotional than usual
- nervous, anxious, depressed

#### **Sleep Disturbance**

- drowsy
- sleeping more/less than usual
- difficulty falling asleep

### Additional Information:

- Signs/symptoms can appear right after the injury, or may appear within hours or days of the injury.
- The signs/symptoms may be different for everyone.
- An individual may be reluctant to report symptoms because of a fear that they will be removed from an activity, or that their employment could be jeopardized.
- It may be difficult for younger children (under the age of 10) and those with special needs or where English/French is not their first language to communicate how they are feeling.
- Signs for younger children (under the age of 10) may not be as obvious as in older children/adults.

### Prevention:

GCC is committed to taking every reasonable precaution to prevent injury and/or illness. All GCC-led activities will be conducted with a focus on minimizing risk to all potential injuries, including concussions.

### Response and management:

If you think you have a concussion:

- Immediately remove yourself from the activity and tell someone.
- Seek medical attention right away.
- Take time to get better.
- Check with your doctor before returning to work.

If you witness a head injury or a head injury is reported to you:

- Encourage the injured person to stop activities.
- Seek medical attention right away.

If a concussion is confirmed:

- the injured individual will be required to seek medical attention prior to returning to work/programming and
- provide written documentation from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner to indicate they are symptom-free and able to return to full participation