

Concussion and Return to Play (RTP) Policy

May 2023 Edition



Preamble

1. Nordiq Alberta (NA) is committed to maintaining the health of the community and believes that participating in the activities organized by Nordiq Alberta can lead to better health. Cross Country Skiing, as most physical activities, has an inherent risk of concussion. Nordiq Alberta recognizes that concussions are a significant public health issue because of their potential short and long-term consequences. Nordiq Alberta, therefore, enacts this policy and related protocols as tools to help prevent, recognize, and properly treat concussions which may occur in our activities

Nordiq Alberta will endeavor to have participants follow all treatment protocols, concussion action plan protocol and return to play protocols.

The proper treatment of a concussion is more important than participation in any sport/recreation/activity/work/school during the healing process.

Definitions

In this policy:

2. **Concussion** means the definition of concussion from the Consensus Statement, Zurich 2012 on concussion in sport:

Concussion is a brain injury and is defined as a complex pathophysiological process affecting the brain, induced by biomechanical forces.

In plain language, a concussion:

- a) 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/behavioral (e.g., depression, irritability) and/or related to sleep (e.g., drowsiness, difficulty falling asleep);
 - b) 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;
 - c) can occur even if there has been no loss of consciousness (in fact most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness); and,
 - d) cannot normally be seen on x-rays, standard CT scans, or MRIs.
3. **Suspected Concussion** means the recognition that an individual appears to have either experienced an injury or impact that may result in a concussion, or is exhibiting unusual behavior that may be the result of concussion.
 4. **Concussion Diagnosis** means a clinical diagnosis made by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner. It is critical that an individual with a suspected concussion be examined by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

Stages of Concussion Management

5. Education:

Nordiq Alberta will see that athletes, parents, and team staff receive concussion education prior to the beginning of each season. Education must include the following topics:

- a) Physiology of a concussion
- b) Early recognition of signs and symptoms of a concussion
- c) Sport injury culture
- d) Sport and recreation-specific concussion prevention strategy
- e) Concussion Action Plan (CAP) Protocol 9. Return to play (RTP) protocol following a concussion.

NA will make this material available through a variety of modalities: coaching courses, officials training, and seminars/webinars.

6. Prevention: Ensuring Safe Play - Concussion Prevention Strategies

Nordiq Alberta requires all activity within its purview to follow the rules of the game as laid out by the Nordiq Alberta Technical Package and that the rules will be consistently enforced in order to effectively ensure safe play. All Nordiq Alberta staff and participants will behave ethically at all times.

Prevention strategies are targeted at a primary, secondary and tertiary level:

- a) Primary prevention: Annual optional education, enforcement of rules laid out in NA's Technical Package.
- b) Secondary Prevention: Officials education, assessment of suspected concussions onsite by medical personnel.
- c) Tertiary Prevention: Reduce stigma and warrior attitudes towards head injuries.

7. Identification – Using the Concussion Action Plan (CAP)

- a) Nordiq Alberta requires that a Concussion Action Plan (CAP) be available and implemented at all activities and events in case of a concussion or suspected concussion.
- b) A Concussion Action Plan (CAP) will allow proper care for athletes when a suspected concussion occurs.
- c) The CAP will provide appropriate direction to all individuals. See CAP Protocol in the appendix.

8. Documentation of Incident

Nordiq Alberta will use the Nordiq Canada's Accident Report Form to record the details of the incident and the athlete's progression through the stages of concussion management. There are several times throughout the duration of the concussion at which information needs to be documented:

- a) Time of injury- record and monitor all signs and symptoms for 48 hours following the injury. (Note if signs get worse and if any from the "red flag" symptoms show follow the emergency protocol).

- b) During recovery- record how much school/work/sport/recreation time has been missed, this is valuable for the athlete if they ever sustain another concussion.
- c) Return to play- documentation needs to occur if the athlete has clearance from a medical doctor before returning to play. There should be documentation from the athlete that states they have successfully returned to school/work full time without recurrent symptoms as well as successfully exercise to exhaustion without recurrent symptoms.

Return to Play (RTP) Protocol

- 9. A participant with a diagnosed concussion follows a medically supervised and individualized gradual Return to Physical Activity (RTP) plan.

It is critical to recovery that the individualize RTP plan be developed through a collaborative team approach. This team should include:

- a) the concussed individual
- b) their parents/guardians (if applicable)
- c) their coach, administrator and/supervisor
- d) school staff, including teachers, coaches etc. (if applicable)
- e) a medical doctor or nurse practitioner

Ongoing communication and monitoring by all members of the team will be essential to successful recovery.

Note – Children/Youth Under the Age of 18

If the concussed participant is under the age of 18 and currently attending a publicly funded elementary/junior high/ high school in Alberta, then that student’s parent/guardian should contact their child’s school principal.

RTP- Step 1

The first step in the medically supervised gradual R2P plan is for the individual to have:

- limit cognitive activities which provoke symptoms (e.g., activities requiring mental concentration such as reading, television, video games, texting) and physical (e.g., activities requiring physical exertion) rest until their symptoms begin to show improvement (minimum of 24 hours). This is determined by the medical doctor or nurse practitioner in consultation with the concussed individual and parent/guardian (if applicable).

Note - In order to proceed to RTP-Step 2, the concussed individual or parent/guardian (if applicable) must report back to their coach, administrator and/or supervisor that they are symptom free.

RTP – Step 2

Activity: Individual light aerobic exercise only (e.g., walking or stationary cycling).

Restrictions: No resistance/weight training. No competition (including practices, scrimmages). No participation with equipment or with other participants. No drills. No body contact.

Note -In order to proceed to RTP – Step 3, the concussed individual or parent/guardian (if applicable) must report back to their coach, administrator and/or supervisor that they are symptom free.

RTP – Step 3

Activity: Individual sport specific exercise only (e.g. running, skating, shooting).

Restrictions: No resistance/weight training. No competition (including practices, scrimmages). No body contact, no head impact activities (e.g., heading a ball in soccer), or other jarring motions (e.g., high speed stops, hitting a baseball with a bat).

RTP – Step 4

Activity: Activities where there is no body contact (e.g., dance, badminton, volleyball). Light resistance/weight training. Non-contact practice and non-contact sport specific drills (e.g., ball drills, shooting drills).

Restrictions: No activities that involve body contact, head impact (e.g., heading the ball in soccer) or other jarring motions (e.g., high speed stops, hitting a baseball with a bat).

Medical Clearance: For a concussed individual to move from RTP-Step 4 to RTP-Step 5 they must provide written documentation from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner to their coach, administrator and/or Supervisor. The documentation must indicate that the individual is symptom-free and able to return to full participation in physical activity before they can proceed to RTP – Step 5.

RTP – Step 5

Activity: Full participation in regular physical activities in non-contact sports. Full training/practices for contact sports.

Restrictions: No competition (e.g., games, meets, events) that involve body contact.