

# TIPS TO HELP PREVENT CONCUSSIONS AND OTHER INJURIES IN WATER POLO GUIDE

## TIPS TO ASSIST PLAYERS AND TEAMMATES IN PREVENTING CONCUSSIONS & OTHER INJURIES IN WATER POLO

Follow these tips to help prevent concussion and other injuries and keep yourself and others safe while practicing or playing water polo.

- ☑ Commit to strong skill and strength development
- ☑ Understand proper technique and follow the rules of the game
- ☑ Ensure you are correctly wearing the appropriate equipment
- ☑ Practice fair play and respect the safety of yourself and everyone in the water.
- ☑ Never hit, strike, kick or head-butt a player from behind.
- ☑ Never hit, strike, kick or head-butt an opponent's head.
- ☑ Keep your head up when you have or do not have the ball. Don't put yourself in a vulnerable position.
- ☑ Make sure you know where the ball is at all times to avoid getting hit in the head.
- ☑ Be aware and stay alert.
- ☑ Control the ball responsibly.
- ☑ Avoid violent contact with a player if they are in a vulnerable position, such as with their back facing you.
- ☑ Communicate with your teammates. If you think a teammate may have a concussion, report symptoms to your coach, team trainer, or safety personnel.
- ☑ Remove yourself from the water if you experience any concussion symptoms after a hard hit by the ball or contact with another player. Report symptoms to your coach, team trainer or safety personnel.

## TIPS TO ASSIST PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS IN HELPING THEIR CHILD PREVENT CONCUSSIONS & OTHER INJURIES IN WATER POLO

Follow these tips to help your child prevent concussions and other injuries and keep themselves and others safe while practicing or playing Water Polo.

- ☑ Help your child develop strong skills and strength.
- ☑ Ensure you understand proper techniques and the rules of water polo, and go over these with your child.
- ☑ Teach your child the importance of good sportsmanship and respecting the safety of both themselves and everyone in the water.
- ☑ Understand and respect the concussion protocols and policies of Water Polo Canada, my province and the National Championship League (NCL).
- ☑ Ensure your child has the appropriate water polo equipment and wears it correctly.
- ☑ Ensure your child knows to never hit, strike, kick or head-butts a player from behind.
- ☑ Ensure your child knows to never hit, strike, kick or head-butts an opponent's head.
- ☑ If you suspect your child may have a concussion, ensure they stop participating in practice or gameplay immediately.
- ☑ Encourage your child to always be aware, stay alert and control the ball responsibly.
- ☑ Talk to your child about the importance of removing themselves from the water if they experience any concussion symptoms after a hard hit by the ball or contact with another player. Ensure they know to report symptoms to you, their coach, team trainer or safety personnel.
- ☑ Remind your child to always avoid violent contact with a player if they are in a vulnerable position (ex. with their back facing them).
- ☑ Attend the Pre-Season Concussion Education Team Meeting and have a conversation with your child afterwards to ensure that they understand everything that was discussed.

## TIPS TO ASSIST COACHES, TRAINERS AND SAFETY PERSONNEL IN PREVENTING CONCUSSIONS & OTHER INJURIES IN & OUT OF THE WATER

Be sure to enforce and integrate these tips into practices and games wherever possible. This will help your team build critical skills, respect themselves and others in the pool, and stay safe.

There are a variety of drills you can run to help players learn to keep their head up while playing and improve safe handling of the ball. Some examples include:

- ☑ When your players are swimming head-up front crawl with the ball, ask them to focus on one point on the other end of the pool. For example, a sign or the lifeguard chair.
- ☑ When your players are swimming head-up front crawl with the ball, ask them to look up and over the top of the ball.
- ☑ To help your players swim head-up front crawl in a straight line and ensure that they are maintaining their ball awareness, you can use the following drill: Ask your players to swim head-up front crawl, either the entire length of the pool or only half-way, while looking towards the right or left. Once they have finished, they must complete the same exercise looking in the opposite direction.
- ☑ Another drill that is useful in maintaining awareness and that the player keeps their head-up while swimming is a swimming, changing direction drill:
  - Start with all of the players spread out in the pool facing the coach.
  - On each whistle, the coach will point in a direction. Whichever direction he/she points is the direction that the players have to swim.
  - The players must keep their eyes on the coach at all times so they know which direction to swim.
  - If the coach points to the back then they swim water polo backstroke.

*\*Note: This drill can be adapted to include a water polo ball where each time the player changes direction, they pick the ball up from underneath. If the coach points to the back then the player would swim layout with the ball.*

### Tips to Teach and Enforce on Your Team:

- ☑ Commit to strong skill and strength development.
- ☑ Understand proper technique and follow the rules of the game.
- ☑ Practice fair play and respect the safety of yourself and everyone in the water.
- ☑ Ensure you are correctly wearing the appropriate equipment (ex. mouthguards, protective/goalie helmets or game caps).
- ☑ Never hit, strike, kick or head-butt a player from behind.
- ☑ Never hit, strike, kick or head-butt an opponent's head.
- ☑ Keep your head up when you have the ball. Don't put yourself in a vulnerable position.

- ☑ Avoid violent contact with a player if they are in a vulnerable position, such as with their back facing you.
- ☑ Be aware and stay alert.
- ☑ Control the ball responsibly.
- ☑ Communicate with your teammates. If you think a teammate may have a concussion, report symptoms to your coach, team trainer, or safety personnel.
- ☑ Remove yourself from the water if you experience any concussion symptoms after a hard hit by the ball or contact with another player. Report symptoms to your coach, team trainer or safety personnel.

### **Tips to Help Prevent Concussion Among Players on Your Team:**

- ☑ If you have a large group of players, have them number off and swim in lines or in circles from fastest to slowest to avoid swimming into each other or causing a head on collision.
- ☑ Remove nets and other hazards during swimming to avoid potential injury.
- ☑ When players on your team are passing the ball to their teammates, encourage them to always be aware, keep their head up, and be ready to catch the ball.
- ☑ Ensure that players are matched up with players of equal strength and abilities in drills such as blocking.
- ☑ Focus on good technique defensively to decrease the odds of getting hit in the face while blocking.
- ☑ Ensure that players do not try to retrieve the ball in the net during a drill. Remind them to wait until there is no one shooting, or take short breaks during the drill for your players to retrieve their balls.
- ☑ Establish a team rule where there are to be no shots on net after the coach whistles for the players to stop the drill and/or return to the side of the pool.
- ☑ For grassroots level water polo programs, use nets that can deform (i.e. inflatable nets) when being struck with the ball to allow some of the energy to be absorbed before potentially ricocheting into the player's face.