

## An Active & Safe Program Resource

*Putting concussion prevention and management tools in the hands of the participants*

# Active & Safe Pledge

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The Active & Safe Pledge is a direct and intentional statement that members of your organization or team will create and sign, acknowledging the movement towards a safer and injury-free playing environment.

Download related resources at [www.cces.ca/activeandsafe](http://www.cces.ca/activeandsafe).

Go For  
It

Play  
Fair

Respect  
Others

Keep It  
Fun

Stay  
Healthy

Include  
Everyone

Give  
Back



TRUE SPORT  
lives here

# Introduction

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The Active & Safe Pledge serves as a source to educate stakeholders of the increasing importance of ensuring safe play, specifically in relation to concussion awareness and prevention in sport. As coaches, parents and organizers, it is your duty to understand the causes and effects of concussion in sport, and to disseminate that information for your stakeholders.

At a minimum, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What is a concussion?
- How do you know when someone has sustained a concussion?
- What steps should be taken when someone is suspected to have sustained a concussion?
- When should an athlete return to play following a concussion?

Acknowledging that concussions are very serious injuries and ensuring that your club and team are actively trying to limit both the occurrence and recurrence of them in our communities is the first step to moving forward. After all, an athlete will never reach their full potential if their brain isn't 100%.

*Throughout the season, observe and refer back to the "Active & Safe Pledge" to ensure that everyone that has an active role in your sport organization/team is consistently reminded of the social contract. Reminding your athletes about their commitment to concussion prevention is an important step in keeping them safe and active.*

# Creating an Active & Safe Pledge

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Creating a social contract ensures that athletes and team stakeholders are invested in their commitment to reducing the incidence and severity of concussion. The goal is to ensure that everyone is aware of the standard practice for dealing with concussion, but also to have it created by the members of the organization/team themselves.

The Active & Safe Pledge:

- Creates a bond between all members of the sport group;
- Instills a sense of involvement and pride in the message;
- Clearly states that lack of care and respect for each other's health will not be accepted;
- Increases awareness and understanding of the signs, symptoms and treatment of brain injury and concussion;
- Emphasizes the support for a safer and stronger sport for all athletes regardless of age, gender or skill level; and
- Acts as a decree by which there can be unwavering support of healthy participants.

The wording of the Active & Safe Pledge should always:

- Be clear and definitive; and
- Apply at all times, to all athletes, coaches, trainers and parents.

The Active & Safe Pledge has a very significant purpose, one that will help the development of your team, athletes, and the parents associated with it. By committing to minimizing the occurrence of concussion, agreeing what to do in the event of a concussion or suspected concussion, and understanding how to manage the injury with return-to-play protocols, you are instilling values and respect while ensuring your athletes have a healthy opportunity to thrive at all ages and levels of play. Brain injuries are commonly known as the “invisible injury” as they are out of sight and it is often difficult to determine their severity. As such, we must take extra precaution in managing them. The Active & Safe Pledge is a commitment to such precautionary measures.

Engraining the principles of the Active & Safe Pledge into your sport organization as a whole, establishes underlying, tangible measures that are in place for all stakeholders to follow. By combining this with each team making their own individual pledges, we are satisfying the concerns of each individual member of the organization. This creates a stronger bond for athletes, coaches and parents, and a dedicated commitment that holds members accountable.

# How to Create an Active & Safe Pledge

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The key to ensuring a successful implementation of the Active & Safe Pledge is to ensure that its principles are instilled as early as possible. Make sure that athletes, coaches and parents are aware of the intent of the activity, and ensure they understand that this is an opportunity to positively shape the way sport is played for years to come. Be sure to emphasize that they control the process, and that it is their decisions and consensus that will lead the team forward.

Get the group together and present them with information about concussion. Refer to Concussion 101 and other Active & Safe resources such as the Ethical Decision-Making Game, Self-Assessment Tool and Long-Term Athlete Development Matrix for additional guidance.

Download these at [www.cces.ca/activeandsafe](http://www.cces.ca/activeandsafe).

Explain the benefits of playing safe, the signs and symptoms of concussion, and the proper return to play protocol, as well as club/association policies and procedures that relate to concussion and injury prevention and treatment. Include ALL of the participants in interactive activities that emphasize the values of safety and fair play, as well as respect.

Children at younger ages (5-8) may find it difficult to create an Active and Safe Pledge due to the need to comprehend the functions of the brain and the science behind it. Use your judgment to determine the extent to which the children can be included.

Encourage as much dialogue as possible. Get to know their thoughts and perceptions about concussion. Take the time to bust the myths and ensure you are providing up-to-date and reliable information (refer to Concussion 101 or [www.parachutecanada.org/activeandsafe](http://www.parachutecanada.org/activeandsafe)).

Once this activity is completed, take some time to discuss the games and their outcomes with the participants. The next step is to develop the pledge based on this conversation and to put it on paper.

At a minimum, your discussion and the Active & Safe Pledge should include the following topics:

Return to Play Protocols Safety	Respect Awareness	Responsibility Prevention
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This initial brainstorming is the beginning of the Active & Safe Pledge coming together. These ideas being shared should all be written down, as well as some items that coaches and other leaders feel are non-negotiable elements (such as a mandatory medical examination for any instance of a suspected concussion).

A discussion or vote should be put forth to determine which pieces are the most important to the team and the safety of the athletes. There is no set minimum or maximum number of criteria that must be put into the pledge, as this must align with the goals of the team or club.

Once the final criteria are determined, it is very beneficial to review the agreed-upon information. By assessing the criteria again in full, we are giving a clear picture to team members, including parents, emphasizing what they agreed upon as a group. By having each individual see these criteria and experience this step, they will know they had a part in creating the pledge, and the success of the tool will be intensified.

An important element of the Active & Safe Pledge is that it can be adapted as new information is made available. Allowing the pledge to evolve over time encourages team members to follow its message, continuing their sense of ownership of the pledge.

Along the way, we must remember that the emphasis is on the organization to create rules, regulations, policies and procedures that minimize the occurrence and severity of brain injury in their sport. These principles do not however, need to be limited to circumstances and events at the club. The goal is to change peoples' perceptions and actions in relation to concussion.

# SAMPLE Active & Safe Pledge

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Team Name:

By signing this paper, as a team and as individuals we pledge:

- To work towards a safer and better sport.
- To be honest with myself and my teammates with regards to signs and symptoms.
- To give 100% commitment to myself, my team and my sport.
- To report any suspected incidence of brain injury or concussion.
- To follow the proper action steps in the incidence of suspected injury.
- To follow the six steps of the Return-to-Play Guidelines.
- To commit myself to True Sport, ensuring sport can have a positive impact on all.



# Player Code of Conduct

## Respect yourself:

- I will wear the proper equipment and wear it correctly.
- I will develop my skill and body strength so that I can play the game to the best of my abilities.
- I understand that a concussion is a **serious** brain injury that has both short- and long-term effects.
- I understand that I don't need to lose consciousness to have had a concussion.
- I understand that any blow to the head, face, or neck, or a blow to the body which causes a sudden jarring of the head may cause a concussion.
- I understand that if I suspect I might have a concussion I should stop playing the sport **immediately**.
- I understand that continuing to play with a suspected concussion increases my risk of more severe, longer lasting concussion symptoms, as well as increases my risk of other injury.
- I will not hide my symptoms. I will tell my coach, trainer, parent, or other responsible person if I am concerned I have had a concussion and/or experience **any** signs and symptoms of concussion following a collision.
- I understand I will not be able to return to play following a collision where I experience signs and symptoms of concussion.
- I understand I will have to be cleared by a physician or qualified medical professional, preferably one with experience in concussion management, prior to returning to play.
- I understand I will have to follow the 6-step Return to Play guidelines when returning to activity.

## Respect Others:

- I will respect the rules of the game.
- I will respect my opponents and play fair.
- I will not fight or attempt to injure anyone on purpose.
- I will respect my coaches, trainers, parents and the medical professionals and any decisions made with regards to my health and safety.

Team: \_\_\_\_\_

Player: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Caregiver: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### About the Active & Safe Program

The Active & Safe program provides resources to reduce the incidence and severity of concussion, while creating the conditions for active and safer play throughout the Canadian sport system.

The project targets coaches, trainers, educators, health professionals, community leaders, parents and athletes. Our combined efforts will contribute to building capacity, engaging communities and their citizens, as well as educating and training those who deliver sport through activities that focus on concussion prevention and treatment. The partners are:

Hockey Canada	<a href="http://www.hockeycanada.ca/apps">www.hockeycanada.ca/apps</a>
Parachute Canada	<a href="http://www.parachute.org/activeandsafe">www.parachute.org/activeandsafe</a>
Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport	<a href="http://www.cces.ca/activeandsafe">www.cces.ca/activeandsafe</a>
Coaching Association of Canada	<a href="http://www.coach.ca">www.coach.ca</a>

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