

CONCUSSION GUIDELINES FOR THE COACH/TRAINER

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that cannot be seen on routine x-rays, CT scans, or MRIs. It affects the way a person may think and remember things for a short time and can cause a variety of symptoms.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF CONCUSSION? AN ATHLETE DOES NOT NEED TO BE KNOCKED OUT (LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS) TO HAVE HAD A CONCUSSION.

THINKING PROBLEMS	ATHLETE'S COMPLAINTS	OTHER PROBLEMS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not know time, date, place, period of game, opposing team, score of game• General confusion• Cannot remember things that happened before and after the injury• Knocked out	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headache• Dizziness• Feels dazed• Feels "dinged" or stunned; "having my bell rung"• Sees stars, flashing lights• Ringing in the ears• Sleepiness• Loss of vision• Sees double or blurry• Stomachache, stomach pain, nausea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor coordination or balance• Blank stare/glassy eyed• Vomiting• Slurred speech• Slow to answer questions or follow directions• Easily distracted• Poor concentration• Strange or inappropriate emotions (ie. laughing, crying, getting mad easily)• Not playing as well

WHAT CAUSES A CONCUSSION?

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 (ie. a ball to the head, being checked into the boards in hockey).

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF AN ATHLETE GETS A CONCUSSION?

THE ATHLETE SHOULD STOP PLAYING THE SPORT RIGHT AWAY. They should not be left alone and should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible that day. If an athlete is knocked out, call an ambulance to take them to a hospital immediately. Do not move the athlete or remove athletic equipment like a helmet as there may also be a cervical spine injury; wait for paramedics to arrive.

AN ATHLETE WITH A CONCUSSION SHOULD NOT GO BACK TO PLAY THAT DAY, EVEN IF THEY SAY THEY ARE FEELING BETTER. Problems caused by a head injury can get worse later that day or night. They should not return to sports until he/she has been seen by a doctor.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR THE ATHLETE TO GET BETTER?

The signs and symptoms of a concussion often last for 7-10 days but may last much longer. In some cases, athletes may take many weeks or months to heal. Having had previous concussions may increase the chance that a person may take longer to heal.

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HOW IS A CONCUSSION TREATED?

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT AN ATHLETE DOES NOT GO BACK TO SPORTS IF THEY HAVE ANY CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS OR SIGNS.

Return to sport and activity must follow a step-wise approach:

- STEP 1)** No activity, complete rest. Once back to normal and cleared by a doctor, go to step 2.
- STEP 2)** Light exercise such as walking or stationary cycling, for 10-15 minutes.
- STEP 3)** Sport specific aerobic activity (ie. skating in hockey, running in soccer), for 20-30 minutes. **NO CONTACT.**
- STEP 4)** “On field” practice such as ball drills, shooting drills, and other activities with **NO CONTACT** (ie. no checking, no heading the ball, etc.).
- STEP 5)** “On field” practice with body contact, once cleared by a doctor.
- STEP 6)** Game play.

NOTE: **EACH STEP MUST TAKE A MINIMUM OF ONE DAY.** If an athlete has any symptoms of a concussion (e.g. headache, feeling sick to his/her stomach) that come back either with activity, or later that day, he/she should stop the activity immediately and rest until symptoms resolve, for a minimum of 24 hours. The athlete should be seen by a doctor and cleared before starting the step wise protocol again. This protocol must be individualized to the athlete, their injury and the sport they are returning to.

WHEN CAN AN ATHLETE WITH A CONCUSSION RETURN TO SPORT?

It is very important that an athlete not play any sports if they have any signs or symptoms of concussion. The athlete must rest until he/she is completely back to normal. When he/she is back to normal and has been seen by a doctor, he/she can then go through the steps of increasing activity described above. When the athlete has progressed through these steps with no symptoms or problems, and has received clearance from a doctor, he/she may return to play. If you are unsure if an athlete should play, remember...**when in doubt, sit them out!**