

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

## 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!**