

CONCUSSION GUIDELINES FOR THE ATHLETE

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? YOU DON'T 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 YOU GET A CONCUSSION?

YOU SHOULD STOP PLAYING THE SPORT RIGHT AWAY. Continuing to play increases your risk of more severe, longer lasting concussion symptoms, as well as increases your risk of other injury. You should tell your coach, trainer, parent or other responsible person that you are concerned you have had a concussion, and should not return to play that day. You should not be left alone and should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible that day. You should not drive. If someone is knocked out, call an ambulance to take them to a hospital immediately. Do not move them or remove athletic equipment such as a helmet until the paramedics arrive.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE 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.

CONCUSSION GUIDELINES FOR THE ATHLETE

HOW IS A CONCUSSION TREATED?

CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS ARE MADE WORSE BY EXERTION, BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL. THE MOST IMPORTANT TREATMENT FOR A

CONCUSSION IS REST. You should not exercise or do any activities that may make you worse, like driving a car, reading, working on the computer or playing video games. No snow shoveling, cutting the lawn, moving heavy objects, etc. If mental activities (eg: reading, concentrating, using the computer) worsen your symptoms, you may have to stay home from school. You may also have to miss work, depending on what type of job you have, and whether it worsens your symptoms. If you go back to activities before you are completely better, you are more likely to get worse, and to have symptoms last longer. Even though it is very hard for an active person to rest, this is the most important step.

Return to school should not happen until you feel better, and these activities do not aggravate your symptoms. It is best to return to school part-time at first, moving to full time if you have no problems. Once you are completely better at rest, you can start a step-wise increase in activities (see “When can I return to sport?”) It is important that you are seen by a doctor before you begin the steps needed to return to activity, to make sure you are completely better. If possible, you should be seen by a doctor with experience in treating concussions.

WHEN SHOULD I GO TO THE DOCTOR?

Anyone who gets a head injury should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible. You should go back to the doctor IMMEDIATELY if, after being told you have a concussion, you have worsening of symptoms like:

1. being more confused
2. headache that is getting worse
3. vomiting more than twice
4. not waking up
5. having any trouble walking
6. having a seizure
7. strange behaviour

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO SPORT?

It is very important that you do not go back to sports if you 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 you have any symptoms of a concussion (e.g. headache, feeling sick to his/her stomach) that come back either with activity, or later that day, stop the activity immediately and rest until symptoms resolve, for a minimum of 24 hours. See a doctor and be cleared before starting the step wise protocol again.

YOU SHOULD NOT GO BACK TO SPORT UNTIL YOU HAVE BEEN CLEARED TO DO SO BY A DOCTOR.

ATHLETE INFORMATION SHEET



It is so important that we take concussions seriously and that athletes are pulled from play once a head injury occurs. Athletes at all levels and in every single sport suffer concussions, helmet or not. As a sports broadcaster I have seen a number of players careers ended due to concussions: Eric Lindros (NHL), Paul Kariya (NHL), Cory Koskie (MLB), Matt Dunnigan (CFL), Steve Young (NFL), Elton Flatley (Rugby), Muhammed Ali (Boxing) and Chuck Liddell (UFC). Other athletes have had to take significant time off before they were well enough to get back into their sports such as Lindsay Vonn (Skier), Paul Scholes (Soccer), Aaron Hill (MLB) and probably one of the most famous in recent times, Sidney Crosby (NHL)... Our brain is the most important thing we possess. You wouldn't send your child back into the game with a broken leg, so we don't want to send them back in with a brain injury and risk, not only their athletic careers, but their entire futures. *Dan O'Toole, Sports Broadcaster, TSN*

A CONCUSSION IS A BRAIN INJURY THAT:

- **Is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body.**
 - **Changes the way your brain normally works.**
 - **Occurs during practices or games in any sport or recreational activity.**
 - **Happens even if you haven't been knocked out.**
 - **Can be serious even if you've just been "dinged" or "had your bell rung."**
- All concussions should be taken seriously.**

A concussion can affect your ability to do schoolwork and other activities (such as playing video games, working on a computer, studying, driving, or exercising). Most people with a concussion get better, but it is important to give your brain time to heal.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION:

You can't see a concussion, but you might notice one or more of the symptoms listed below or that you "don't feel right" soon after, a few days after, or even weeks after the injury.



- **Headache or "pressure" in the head**
- **Nausea or vomiting**
- **Balance problems or dizziness**
- **Double or blurry vision**
- **Bothered by light or noise**
- **Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy**
- **Difficulty paying attention**
- **Memory problems**
- **Confusion**





ATHLETE INFORMATION SHEET

**IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION
TELL YOUR PARENT, COACH OR GUARDIAN IMMEDIATELY**

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A CONCUSSION?

- If you feel any signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion, you need to tell your parent, coach or guardian immediately. You must be removed immediately from practice or competition and should not return to activity until evaluated and cleared by a health care provider.
- Where possible, you should be evaluated on the sideline by a certified athletic trainer, EMS, or other health care provider.
- Seek medical care within 48 hours and contact your family doctor or nurse practitioner immediately to book an appointment and contact the Youth Sports Concussion Program at (705) 740-8020. A family doctor or nurse practitioner with the Youth Sports Concussion Program can tell if you have a concussion and when it is OK to return to play.
- Give yourself time to get better. If you have a concussion, your brain needs time to heal. While your brain is still healing, you are much more likely to have another concussion. Repeat concussions can increase the time it takes for you to recover and may cause more damage to your brain. It is important to rest and not return to play until you get the OK from your health care professional that you are symptom-free.

RETURN TO PLAY:

Primary care providers can provide you with return to play protocol, and create a pathway of care action plan to best meet your individual needs.

Is Emergency Medical Care Needed?

WATCH FOR THESE "RED FLAGS"

- **Loss of consciousness >1 minute**
- **Suspected seizure (jerking movements)**
- **Weakness or numbness/tingling**
- **Confusion, agitation, drowsiness**
- **Persistent vomiting**
- **Severe neck pain or neck pain with numbness/tingling**

ANY OF THE ABOVE REQUIRE AN EMERGENCY MEDICAL ASSESSMENT