

Concussion Guidelines for Parents & Coaches



All concussions must be taken seriously to safeguard the health and welfare of players. Failing to do so can have serious consequences, including death.

What is concussion?

- Concussion is a brain injury caused by a blow to the head or body which leads to shaking of the brain
- Concussion results in a disturbance in brain function that can affect a child or young person's thinking, memory, mood, behaviour, level of consciousness, as well as producing physical symptoms such as headache and dizziness
- Concussion usually occurs without loss of consciousness
- Most concussions recover with physical *and* mental rest

Principles of concussion management:

RECOGNISE – REMOVE – RECOVER – RETURN

1. **RECOGNISE** - know the symptoms and signs of concussion and the DANGER SIGNS of potentially more serious brain injury.



RECOGNISING CONCUSSION:

After a fall or impact, concussion should be suspected in the presence of any one or more of the following:

- Symptoms e.g. headache, dizziness, nausea
- Physical signs e.g. unsteadiness, dazed/dinged
- Impaired brain function e.g. confusion, memory loss, disorientated
- Abnormal behaviour e.g. change in personality
- Confirmed or suspected loss of consciousness



DANGER SIGNS

- Deteriorating conscious state (more drowsy)
- Increasing confusion or irritability
- Severe or increasing headache
- Repeated vomiting
- Unusual behaviour change
- Seizure or convulsion
- Double vision
- Weakness, tingling or burning in limbs



2. **REMOVE**

If concussion is suspected immediately remove the individual from play and do not allow to return.

Players with any symptoms following a head injury must be removed from playing or training and must not return to activity until all symptoms have cleared. Specifically, they must not return to play on the day of any suspected concussion.

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The player should be monitored over the next 24-48 hours for any of the danger signs (listed above) and ***if any symptoms or signs that develop, or if there is an overall deterioration, then immediate medical help should be sought.***

3. RECOVER

All cases of concussion and suspected concussion must be given time to recover - rest the body (e.g. avoid sports, running, cycling, swimming and weight training) and rest the brain (e.g. avoid reading, television, computer, video games and social media) until symptom free.

Children and young people (***under 18***) must rest from training and matches for a minimum of 14 days unless cleared to do so by a doctor specialising in concussion assessment and management.

4. RETURN

For Players 18 years of age and over:

- Once the player is entirely symptom free then they should follow a Graduated Return To Play (GRTP) protocol. This should be done under the guidance of a Doctor or Physiotherapist familiar with the protocol
- Players that fail to progress through the GRTP because symptoms return should be referred for further medical review
- Players who complete a GRTP must receive medical clearance from a doctor or an approved healthcare professional before returning to play

For Players Under 18:

Concussion and participation in sport:

- Following the 14 day rest period, if entirely symptom free, they should then follow a Graduated Return To Play (GRTP) protocol under the guidance of a Doctor or Physiotherapist familiar with the protocol
- It is recommended that every child or young person is assessed by a doctor before returning to play. Ideally, that doctor should be one with expertise in managing concussion
- Children and young people that fail to progress through the GRTP because symptoms return should be referred for further medical review

Concussion and school studies:

- Children and young people should return to academic studies before they return to sport.
- In a small number of cases, symptoms may be prolonged and this may impact on the child's studies. In such cases, early referral back to GP and educational support services is advised

RECOGNISE – REMOVE – RECOVER – RETURN

For a more comprehensive guide and GRTP protocol please see the full Hockey Concussion Guidelines