

Concussion Education & Return-To-Play Guidelines

Concussion In Sport

All players who experience a concussion must be seen by a doctor as soon as possible. A concussion is a brain injury.

How Concussions Happen

A blow to the head, face, jaw, or even elsewhere on the body. It may also result from a whiplash effect to the head and neck.

Common Signs And Symptoms of Concussion

Signs and symptoms may have a delayed onset (may be worse later that day or even the next morning), so players should continue to be observed even after the initial signs and symptoms have returned to normal.

***A player may show any one or more of these signs or symptoms**

SIGNS

- Poor balance or coordination
- Slow or slurred speech
- Poor concentration
- Delayed response to questions
- Vacant stare
- Decreased playing ability
- Unusual emotions, personality change, and inappropriate behavior

SYMPTOMS

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Feeling dazed
- Seeing stars
- Sensitivity to light
- Ringing in ears
- Tiredness
- Nausea, vomiting
- Irritability
- Confusion, disorientation

Caution

All players must consult a physician when a concussion is suspected. Coaches, trainers/safety people, players and parents should not attempt to treat a concussion without a physician's involvement.

Initial Response To Loss Of Consciousness

If there is loss of consciousness – Initiate Emergency Action Plan and call an ambulance. Assume possible neck injury. Continue to monitor airway, breathing and circulation.

Concussion – Key Steps

- Remove the player from the current game or practice
- Do not leave player alone; monitor signs and symptoms
- Do not administer medication
- Inform the parent, coach, or guardian about the injury
- The player should be evaluated by a doctor as soon as possible
- The player must not return to play in that game or practice

6-Step Return-To-Play

The return to play process is gradual, and begins after a doctor has given the player clearance to return to activity. If any symptoms/signs return during this process, the player must be re-evaluated by a doctor. No return to play if any symptoms or signs persist. Remember, symptoms may return later that day or the next, not necessarily when exercising.

Step 1: No activity, only complete mental and physical rest. Proceed to step 2 only when all symptoms are gone. This includes avoiding both mental and physical stress.

Step 2: Light aerobic exercise, such as walking or stationary cycling. Monitor for symptoms and signs. No resistance training or weight lifting.

Step 3: Sport specific activities and training (e.g. skating).

Step 4: Drills without body contact. May add light resistance training and progress to heavier weights.

The time needed to progress from non-contact to contact exercise will vary with the severity of the concussion and the player. Go to step 5 after medical clearance (reassessment and note).

Step 5: Begin drills with body contact.

Step 6: Game play. (The earliest a concussed athlete should return to play is one week).

Note: Players should proceed through return to play steps only when they do not experience signs or symptoms and the doctor has given clearance. **Each step should be a minimum of one day.** If signs or symptoms return, the player should return to step 1, and be re-evaluated by a doctor.

Never return to play if symptoms persist!