Concussion Guidelines for COACHES & TRAINERS

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, and can cause a variety of symptoms.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF CONCUSSION?

A STUDENT DOES NOT NEED TO BE KNOCKED OUT (LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS) TO HAVE HAD A CONCUSSION.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THINKING PROBLEMS</th>
<th>ATHLETE’S COMPLAINTS</th>
<th>OTHER PROBLEMS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Does not know time, date, place, period of game, opposing team, score of game</td>
<td>• Headache</td>
<td>• Poor coordination or balance</td>
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<tr>
<td>• General confusion</td>
<td>• Dizziness</td>
<td>• Blank stare/glassy eyed</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cannot remember things that happened before and after the injury</td>
<td>• Feels dazed</td>
<td>• Vomiting</td>
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<td>• Knocked out</td>
<td>• Feels “dinged” or stunned; “having my bell rung”</td>
<td>• Slurred speech</td>
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<td>• Sees stars, flashing lights</td>
<td>• Slow to answer questions or follow directions</td>
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<td>• Ringing in the ears</td>
<td>• Easily distracted</td>
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<td>• Sleepiness</td>
<td>• Poor concentration</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Loss of vision</td>
<td>• Strange or inappropriate emotions (ie. laughing, crying, getting mad easily)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Sees double or blurry</td>
<td>• Not playing as well</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Stomachache, stomach pain, nausea</td>
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</tbody>
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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

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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 STUDENT 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.

**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 about 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 the athlete has any symptoms of a concussion (e.g. headache, feeling sick to his/her stomach) that come back at any step, STOP activity, wait 24-48 hours, and resume activity at previous step. 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!*