

CONCUSSION GUIDELINES FOR THE PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

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 your child may think and remember things, and can cause a variety of symptoms.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF CONCUSSION? YOUR CHILD DOES NOT NEED TO BE KNOCKED OUT (LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS) TO HAVE HAD A CONCUSSION.

THINKING PROBLEMS	CHILD'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 YOUR CHILD GETS A CONCUSSION?

YOUR CHILD 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 your child is knocked out, call an ambulance to take him/her to a hospital immediately. Do not move your child or remove any equipment such as helmets until the paramedics arrive.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR MY CHILD 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?

THE MOST IMPORTANT TREATMENT FOR A CONCUSSION IS REST. The child should not exercise, go to school or do any activities that may make them worse, like riding a bike, play wrestling, reading, working on the computer or playing video games. If your child goes back to activities before they are completely better, they are more likely to get worse, and to have symptoms longer. Even though it is very hard for an active child to rest, this is the most important step.

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Once your child is completely better at rest (all symptoms have resolved), they can start a step-wise increase in activities. It is important that your child is seen by a doctor before he/she begins the steps needed to return to activity, to make sure he/she is completely better. If possible, your child should be seen by a doctor with experience in treating concussions.

WHEN CAN MY CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL?

Sometimes children who have a concussion may find it hard to concentrate in school and may get a worse headache or feel sick to their stomach if they are in school. Children should stay home from school if their symptoms get worse while they are in class. Once they feel better, they can try going back to school part time to start (eg. for half days initially) and if they are okay with that, then they can go back full time.

WHEN CAN MY CHILD RETURN TO SPORT?

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOUR CHILD NOT GO BACK TO SPORTS IF HE/SHE HAS 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 your child has any symptoms of a concussion (e.g. headache, feeling sick to his/her stomach) that come back either during activity, or later that day, your child should stop the activity immediately and rest until symptoms resolve, for a minimum of 24 hours. Your child should be seen by a doctor and cleared again before starting the step wise protocol again.

WHEN SHOULD I TAKE MY CHILD TO THE DOCTOR?

Every child who gets a head injury should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible. Your child should go back to the doctor **IMMEDIATELY** if, after being told he/she has a concussion, he/she has worsening of symptoms such as:

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

Problems caused by a head injury can get worse later that day or night. The child should not be left alone and should be checked throughout the night. If you have any concerns about the child's breathing or how they are sleeping, wake them up. Otherwise, let them sleep. If they seem to be getting worse, you should see your doctor immediately. **NO CHILD SHOULD GO BACK TO SPORT UNTIL THEY HAVE BEEN CLEARED TO DO SO BY A DOCTOR.**

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET



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. Signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days after the injury. If your child reports one or more symptoms of concussions listed below, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, keep your child out of play and seek medical attention right away.

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- **Loss of Consciousness**
 - **Confusion / disorientation**
 - **Memory loss**
 - **Slow responses or movements**
 - **Inability to focus**
 - **Headache**
 - **Excessive drowsiness**
 - **Feeling "in a fog", "zoned out"**
 - **Vacant stare, "glassy eyed"**
 - **Overly emotional**
 - **Dizziness or loss of balance**
 - **Slurred/incoherent speech**
 - **Blurry or double vision**
 - **Sensitivity to light**
 - **Nausea/Vomiting**

IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION:

1. **Keep your child out of play.** If your child has a concussion, her/his brain needs time to heal. Don't let your child return to play the day of the injury and until a health care provider from the Youth Sports Concussion Program says your child is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short period of time (hours, days, or weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the likelihood of having long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in edema (brain swelling), permanent brain damage, and even death.



If you think your child has a concussion take them out of the game and contact your family doctor or nurse practitioner immediately to book an appointment and contact the Youth Sports Concussion Program at (705) 740-8020.



PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

2. Seek medical attention right away.

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

Whether or not seen in ER, parents should contact the Youth Sports Concussion Program and their family doctor or nurse practitioner as soon as possible. They will help decide how serious the concussion is and when it is safe for your child to return to sports.

3. **Diet.** Drink only clear liquids for the first 8-12 hours and eat reduced amounts of food thereafter for the remainder of the first 24 hours.
4. **Pain Medication.** Do not take any pain medication except Tylenol. Dosing instructions on the bottle should be followed.
5. **Educate your child that it's not smart to play with a concussion.** Rest is key after a concussion. Sometimes athletes wrongly believe that it shows strength and courage to play injured. Discourage others from pressuring injured athletes to play. Don't let your child convince you that s/he's "just fine."
6. **Tell all of your child's coaches and teachers about ANY concussion.** Coaches, teachers, and other school staff should know if your child has ever had a concussion. Your child may need to limit activities while s/he is recovering from a concussion. Things such as studying, driving, working on a computer, playing video games, or exercising may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse. Talk to your health care provider, as well as your child's coaches and teachers. If needed, they can help adjust your child's school activities during her/his recovery.



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