

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.

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 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

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 ATHLETE TO GET BETTER?

The signs and symptoms of a concussion often last for 10-14 days but may last much longer. In some cases, athletes may take many weeks or months to heal. If symptoms are persistent (e.g, more than 10–14 days in adults or more than 1 month in children), the athlete should be referred to a healthcare professional who is an expert in the management of concussion. 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) After an initial short period of rest of 24-48 hours, light cognitive and physical activity can be initiated as long as they don't worsen symptoms. A physician, preferably one with experience managing concussions, should be consulted before beginning a step-wise [return to learn](#) and sport strategy.

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.

There should be at least 24 hours (or longer) for each step of the progression. If any symptoms worsen during exercise, STOP activity and go back to the previous step. Resistance training should be added only in the later stages (Step 4 or 5 at the earliest). If symptoms are persistent (e.g, more than 10–14 days in adults or more than 1 month in children), the athlete should be referred to a healthcare professional who is an expert in the management of concussion.

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. 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 the sport.

RESOURCES

Return to Learn Protocol

<http://horizon.parachutecanada.org/en/article/parachutes-return-to-learn-protocol/>

To learn more visit www.parachutecanada.org/concussion