

Concussion Guidance

At all levels in all sports, if an athlete is suspected of having a concussion, they must be immediately removed from play. **If in doubt, sit them out**.

**CONCUSSION FACTS**

**A concussion is a brain injury.**

**All concussions are serious.**

**Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.**

**Anyone with any symptoms following a head injury must be removed from playing or training and must not take part in any physical activity until all concussion symptoms have cleared.**

**Specifically, there must be no return to play on the day of any suspected concussion.**

**Return to education or work takes priority over return to play.**

**If in doubt, sit them out to help prevent further injury or even death.**

**Concussion can be fatal.**

**Most concussions recover with rest.**

**The first symptoms of concussion can present at any time, but typically appear in the first 24-48 hours following a head injury.**

How to recognise a concussion.

If any of the following signs or symptoms are present following an injury the player should be suspected of having a concussion and immediately removed from play or training.

Visible clues of concussion

Any one or more of the following visual clues can indicate a concussion:

• Dazed, blank or vacant look

• Lying motionless on ground / slow to get up

• Unsteady on feet / balance problems or falling over / Incoordination

• Loss of consciousness or responsiveness

• Confused / not aware of plays or events

• Grabbing / clutching of head

• Seizure (fits)

• More emotional / irritable than normal for that person

Symptoms of concussion

Presence of any one or more of the following signs & symptoms may suggest a concussion:

• Headache

• Dizziness

• Mental clouding, confusion, or feeling slowed down

• Visual problems

• Nausea or vomiting

• Fatigue

• Drowsiness / Feeling like “in a fog“ / difficulty concentrating

• “Pressure in head”

• Sensitivity to light or noise

If concussion is suspected, the player must be removed immediately from play. Assess the player (school nurse to do this if it happens at school), using some of the following questions, tailored to the individual being assessed:

“What venue are we at today?” or “Where are we now?”

“Which half is it now?” or “Approximately what time of day is it?”

“Who scored last in this game?” or “How did you get to here today?”

“What team did you play last game?” or “Where were you on this day last week?”

“Did your team win the last game?” or “What were you doing this time last week?”

**Once removed from play, they must not return to activity for the rest of the day.**

**If ANY of the following are reported then the player should be transported for urgent medical assessment at the nearest hospital:**

**• Severe neck pain**

**• Deteriorating consciousness (more drowsy)**

**• Increasing confusion or irritability**

**• Severe or increasing headache**

**• Repeated vomiting**

**• Unusual behaviour change**

**• Seizure (fit)**

**• Double vision**

**• Weakness or tingling / burning in arms or legs**

**If a player has been removed from play but does not have any of the above urgent signs, parents should be informed to look out for any signs of concussion (there can be a delay in symptoms, even for a few days after the incident). If they have any concerns, they should seek medical advice (this can be through a GP but it is recommended they attend the RHSC A&E department).**

Ongoing management of concussion

Rest is the best treatment for concussion.

Following a diagnosis of concussion, a rest period of 2 weeks will be enforced by the school.

After 2 weeks rest and no further symptoms, a ‘gradual return to play’ program will be followed, as below.

Once the program has started, the player may only progress to the next stage once they are symptom free at rest.

**Minimum Return to Play Intervals when following GRTP protocol**

(table modified from:Scotland Sport (2015))

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AGE GROUP** | **GRTP STAGE 1 MINIMUM REST PERIOD** | **Return to play protocol should be started only if the player is symptom free and off medication that modifies symptoms of concussion** | **GRTP STAGES 2 TO 5** | **Contact sport should be authorized only if the player is symptom free and off medication Medical clearance recommended** | **GRTP STAGE 6 MINIMUM RETURN TO PLAY INTERVAL** |
| Children (up to 18 years old) | 14 days | 4 stage GRTP Progression every 48 hours if symptom free | 14 days rest + 8 days GRTP = 23 days post injury |
| Adults | 7 days | 4 stage GRTP Progression every 24 hours if symptom free | 7 days rest + 4 days GRTP = 12 days post injury |

Any player with a second concussion within 12 months, a history of multiple concussions, players with unusual presentations or prolonged recovery should be assessed and managed by health care providers with experience in sports-related concussions.

**Graduated Return to Play protocol**

(table modified from:Scotland Sport (2015))

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Stage** | **Rehabilitation Stage** | **Exercise Allowed** | **Duration** | **Objective** |
| 1 | Minimum rest period | Complete rest (body and brain) |  | Recovery |
| 2 | Light exercise | Walking, light jogging, swimming. No resistance training, no heavy lifting, no jumping or hard running. **NO** head impact activities | <15 min | Increase heart rate |
| 3 | Sport-specific exercise | Simple movement activities, e.g drills. Limit body and head movement, with **NO** head impact activities | <45 min | Add movement |
| 4 | Non-contact training | Progression to more complex training, increasing intensity, coordination and attention e.g passing. Some resistance training but **NO** head impact activities | <60 min | Exercise, coordination and skills |
| 5 | Full contact practice | Normal training, including tackling |  | Boost confidence and assess functional skills |
| 6 | Return to play | Player rehabilitated |  | Return to play |

If you require any further information or advice for how to treat head injuries, please also see the NHS guidance which can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/concussion/> or

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/minor-head-injury/>

**References**

Scotland Sport (2015) If In Doubt, Sit Them Out. *Scottish Sport Concussion Guidance: Grassroots sports and general public*. Available at:

file://fs01/staff$/Nurse/Desktop/scottish-sports-concussion-guidance.pdf[Accessed October 2019]

NHS (2017) Concussion. *NHS*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/concussion/> [Accessed October 2019]

NHS (2017) Head Injury and Concussion. *NHS*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/minor-head-injury/> [Accessed October 2019]