

Concussion Guidelines for **PARENTS and 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 a person may think and remember things for a short time, and can cause a variety of symptoms.

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 (e.g. a ball to the head, being checked into the boards in hockey).

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU GET A CONCUSSION?

Your child should stop playing the sport right away.

- They should not be left alone.
- They should be seen by a doctor or nurse practitioner as soon as possible that day.
- If your child is knocked out, call an ambulance to take them to the hospital immediately.
- Do not move your child or remove any equipment such as a helmet, in case of a cervical spine injury.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS AND SIGNS OF CONCUSSION?

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

| THINKING PROBLEMS | ATHLETE/STUDENT 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 • Stomach ache, 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 (e.g. laughing, crying, getting angry easily) • Not playing as well |

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Anyone who is assessed with any SIGNS and SYMPTOMS of a concussion should be seen by a doctor or nurse practitioner as soon as possible.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE 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?

CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS ARE MADE WORSE BY EXERTION, BOTH PHYSICAL AND MENTAL. 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, 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.

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.
- Returning to school should not happen until the child feels better, or is symptom free (minimum 24 hours from initial diagnosis).
- If the child returns to school with symptoms they may need to be part-time at first, moving to full time if they have no problems.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Ontario Concussion Portal:

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/concussions

Sport Concussion Library: www.sportconcussionlibrary.com

Health Units supporting Thames Valley Schools:

- Elgin St. Thomas Public Health: www.elginhealth.on.ca
- Middlesex London Public Health: www.healthunit.com
- Oxford Public Health: www.oxfordcounty.ca/health

Fowler Kennedy Sport Medicine Clinic: Sport Concussion Care:

www.fowlerkennedy.com/patient-care-services/sport-concussion-care

WHEN CAN MY CHILD RETURN TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

It is very important that your child not go back to activity if they have any concussion signs or symptoms .

Return to sport and activity must follow a step-wise approach.

STEP 1) Physical and Cognitive Rest (continues for a minimum of 24 hours and until):

- Symptoms begin to improve; OR,
- You are symptom free as determined by parents/guardian and you.
- If you return to school with symptoms you may need to be part-time at first, moving to full time if you have no problems.

Schools will develop an individualized program for student.

STEP 2 (a) Return to School (with symptoms):

- No physical activity.
- Individualized classroom strategies will be used to meet your needs.
- Learning activities and expectations will be increased slowly.
- Communication with school on a regular basis about your symptoms until symptom free.

STEP 2(b) Return to School (no symptoms)

- You will resume regular learning activities.
- You will begin the gradual Return to Physical Activity using the following step-wise approach.

STEP 2) Individual light aerobic exercise only

- No weight training, no participation with equipment or students, NO CONTACT.

STEP 3) Individual sport-specific physical activity only

- No weight training, no participation with equipment or students, NO CONTACT.

STEP 4) Begin activities where there is no contact

- If symptom free after Step 4, you will need to obtain medical clearance from a doctor/nurse practitioner.
- You will not be able to go back to regular physical active / sport until you have been cleared to do so by a doctor / nurse practitioner.

STEP 5) Resume regular physical education / intramural/ inter-school activities in non-contact sports and full practice for contact sports.

STEP 6) Resume full participation in contact sport with no restrictions.

If you have any symptoms of a concussion (e.g. headache, feeling sick to your stomach) that come back either with activity, or later that day, stop the activity immediately and rest until symptoms resolve, for a minimum of 24 hours.

See a doctor and be cleared before starting the step-wise protocol again.

