

# ThinkFirst Concussion Education and Awareness Program

## CONCUSSION IN SPORT

- ◆ All players who experience a concussion must be seen by a physician as soon as possible. A concussion is a brain injury.
- ◆ A concussion most often occurs without a loss of consciousness. However, a concussion may involve loss of consciousness.
- ◆ **HOW CONCUSSIONS HAPPEN:** Blow to the head, face or jaw, or even elsewhere on the body. May also result from a whiplash effect to the head and neck.

## Common Symptoms and Signs of Concussion

- ◆ Symptoms and signs may have a delayed onset (may be worse later that day or even the next morning), so players should continue to be observed even after the initial symptoms and signs have returned to normal.

**\* A player may show any one or more of these symptoms or signs.**

### Symptoms

- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Feeling dazed
- ◆ Seeing stars
- ◆ Sensitivity to light
- ◆ Ringing in ears
- ◆ Tiredness
- ◆ Nausea, vomiting
- ◆ Irritability
- ◆ Confusion, disorientation

### Signs

- ◆ Poor balance or coordination
- ◆ Slow or slurred speech
- ◆ Poor concentration
- ◆ Delayed responses to questions
- ◆ Vacant stare
- ◆ Decreased playing ability
- ◆ Unusual emotions, personality change, and inappropriate behaviour

For a complete list of symptoms and signs, visit [www.ThinkFirst.ca](http://www.ThinkFirst.ca)

**Caution:** All players should consult a physician when a concussion is suspected. Coaches, trainers/safety people, players and parents should not attempt to treat a concussion without a physician's involvement.

## Initial Response to Loss of Consciousness

- ◆ If there is loss of consciousness – Initiate Emergency Action Plan and call an ambulance. Assume possible neck injury. Continue to monitor airway, breathing and circulation.

## Concussion – Key Steps

- ◆ Remove the player from the current game or practice
- ◆ Do not leave the player alone; monitor symptoms and signs
- ◆ Do not administer medication
- ◆ Inform the coach, parent or guardian about the injury
- ◆ The player should be evaluated by a medical doctor as soon as possible
- ◆ The player must not return to play in that game or practice



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Drafted with the assistance of ThinkFirst Canada.  
[www.thinkfirst.ca](http://www.thinkfirst.ca)

## 6 Step Return to Play

◆ The return to play process is gradual, and begins after a doctor has given the player clearance to return to activity. If any symptoms/signs return during this process, the player must be re-evaluated by a physician. No return to play if any symptoms or signs persist. Remember, symptoms may return later that day or the next, not necessarily when exercising!

**Step 1** No activity, only complete rest. Proceed to step 2 only when all symptoms are gone. This includes avoiding both mental and physical stress.

**Step 2** Light aerobic exercise, such as walking or stationary cycling. Monitor for symptoms and signs. No resistance training or weight lifting.

**Step 3** Sport specific activities and training (e.g. skating).

**Step 4** Drills without body contact. May add light resistance training and progress to heavier weights.

The time needed to progress from non-contact to contact exercise will vary with the severity of the concussion and the player. Go to step 5 after medical clearance. (reassessment and note)

**Step 5** Begin drills with body contact.

**Step 6** Game play.  
(The earliest a concussed athlete should return to play is one week).

**Note:** Players should proceed through return to play steps only when they do not experience symptoms or signs and a physician has given clearance. Each step should be a minimum of one day. If symptoms or signs return, the player should return to step 1, and be re-evaluated by a physician.

## Never return to play if symptoms persist!

### Prevention Tips

#### Players

- ◆ Make sure your helmet fits snugly and that the strap is fastened
- ◆ Get a custom fitted mouth guard
- ◆ Respect other players
- ◆ No hits to the head
- ◆ No hits from behind

#### Coach/Trainer/ Safety Person/Referee

- ◆ Eliminate all checks to the head
- ◆ Eliminate all hits from behind
- ◆ Recognize symptoms and signs of concussion
- ◆ Inform and educate players about the risks of concussion

#### Education Tips

[www.hockeycanada.ca](http://www.hockeycanada.ca)

See ThinkFirst Smart Hockey Program at

**ThinkFirst Canada website ([www.thinkfirst.ca](http://www.thinkfirst.ca))**

Dr. Tom Pashby Sport Safety Fund website ([www.drpushby.ca](http://www.drpushby.ca))