

Sudbury Minor Hockey Association

Concussion in Sport

Steps to Recovery from Concussion- Return to Play Protocol

It is imperative that each team Trainer has a copy of the Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool (CRT) in their trainer kit and on hand at all practices and games to quickly recognize and help assess the risk of a concussion. (post link to Pocket CRT).

A concussion is a serious event, but you can recover fully from such an injury if the brain is given enough time to rest and recuperate. A concussion is a brain injury and requires that a physician assess the player in question to determine the extent of the injury. A concussion most often occurs without a loss of consciousness, however, a concussion may involve loss of consciousness.

Returning to normal activities, including sport participation is a step-wise process that requires patience, attention, and caution. Each step must take a minimum of one day but could last longer, depending on the player and his or her specific situation.

The return to play process is gradual, and begins after a doctor has given the player clearance to return to activity.

Steps 1 through 4 must be completed with consultation between the parent/guardian and the coach. Doctor's clearance must be submitted to your coach or the Team Trainer/Safety Person after completion of step 4 and before movement to step 5, who will in turn inform the Association.

Never return to play if symptoms persist!

A player who returns to active play before full recovery from the first concussion is at high risk of sustaining another concussion, with symptoms that may be increased and prolonged.

STEP 1: No activity, only complete rest.

Limit school, work and tasks requiring concentration. Refrain from physical activity until symptoms are gone. Decrease mental and physical stress. Once symptoms are gone, a physician, preferably one with experience managing concussions, should be consulted before beginning a step-wise return to play process.

Functional Exercise: Cognitive and physical rest.

Objective of this Step: Recovery

STEP 2: Light aerobic exercise.

Activities such as walking or stationary cycling occur at less than 70% intensity. The player should be supervised by someone who can help monitor for concussion signs and symptoms. No resistance training or weight lifting. The duration and intensity of the aerobic exercise can be gradually increased over time if no symptoms or signs return during the exercise or the next day.

Symptoms? Return to rest (step 1) until symptoms have resolved. If symptoms persist, consult a physician.

No symptoms? Proceed to Step 3 the next day.

Objective of this Step: Increase heart rate (HR).

STEP 3: Sport specific activities.

Activities such as skating or running can begin at step 3. There should be no body contact, no head impact activities or other jarring motions such as high speed stops.

Symptoms? Return to rest (step 1) until symptoms have resolved. If symptoms persist, consult a physician.

No symptoms? Proceed to Step 4 the next day.

Objective of this Step: Add movement.

STEP 4: Non-Contact Training Drills

Progression to more complex training drills (eg. Passing drill, shooting drills, skating). May start progressive resistance training if symptoms free up until this point.

Symptoms? Return to rest (step 1) until symptoms have resolved. If symptoms persist, consult a physician.

No symptoms? The time needed to progress from non-contact exercise will vary with the severity of the concussion and with the player.

Objective of this Step: Exercise, Coordination and increase cognitive load.

***** Proceed to Step 5 only after medical clearance. *****

STEP 5: Full Contact Practice

Following medical clearance, begin drills with body contact and participate in normal training activities.

Symptoms? Return to rest (step 1) until symptoms have resolved. If symptoms persist, consult a physician.

No symptoms? Proceed to Step 6 the next day.

Objective of this Step: Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff.

STEP 6: Game play

The earliest a concussed athlete should return to play is one week after initial incident.

****The protocol above is in accordance with current “return to play guidelines” recommended from the Summary and Agreement Statement of the 4th International Conference on Concussion in Sport, Zurich, November 2012. Released February 2013. ****