



# CONCUSSION

Important Information for Coaches, Trainers, Athletes and Parents

## What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that occurs after an athlete receives a blow to the head, face or neck or anywhere on the body that transmits force to the head. Concussion generally involves a short-lived period of impaired brain function and thus affects how an athlete thinks and behaves.

## How can I help to recognize a possible concussion?

In order to help identify a concussion, it is important to watch for two things during both practices and games:

1) Any injury that involves a forceful blow to the head, neck or body

**AND**

2) Any signs or symptoms of a concussion (see below), such as changes in the way an athlete thinks or behaves.

Concussion signs and symptoms generally evolve over time. It is therefore important to continuously monitor athletes if you have any concerns about a possible concussion.

## What are the symptoms and signs of an acute concussion?

### Athlete may report these symptoms:

- Headache or “pressure” in head
- Neck pain
- Dizziness or balance problems
- Nausea or vomiting
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling foggy, sluggish, hazy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Does not “feel right”

### Coaches, trainers, parents and other players might observe these signs:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Confusion about assignment or position,
- Unclear about game, score or opponent
- Forgets plays or does them incorrectly
- Poor coordination/balance
- Slowed reaction times
- Loss of consciousness
- Amnesia (difficulty remembering things)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Behavior or personality changes

**“WHEN IN DOUBT .... SIT THEM OUT!”**

**“IT’S BETTER TO MISS ONE GAME THAN THE WHOLE SEASON”**

### **What are danger signs or red flags?**

Forceful blows to the head, neck or body can sometimes cause more severe traumatic brain injuries. If any of the following signs or symptoms are reported/observed, you should call 911:

- Worsening headaches
- Seizures or convulsions
- Weakness, numbness or difficulty with co-ordination
- Repeated vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Worsening confusion, restlessness or agitation
- Drowsiness/difficulty staying awake
- Unequal pupil size

### **Why should I be concerned about a concussion?**

With appropriate management, the majority of athletes will recover a concussion between 7-10 days. For some athletes, however, concussion symptoms may last longer. Following a concussion, an athlete's brain needs time to heal. Sustaining a second injury before an athlete is fully recovered can slow recovery and can result in prolonged symptoms. In very rare cases, it can cause much more severe conditions.

### **How can I help my athlete recover from a concussion?**

As a coach, **you play an important role** in the early detection and proper management of concussions. You can help by educating your athletes, parents and trainers about the signs and symptoms of concussion as well as creating an environment that supports the reporting of concussion symptoms and proper evaluation of injured players. All athletes with a suspected concussion should be assessed by a trained healthcare professional. Initially, athletes with concussions need mental and physical rest and supervision for worsening symptoms. A graduated return to mental activities (Return-to-Learn) and physical activities (Return-to-Play) is essential to any concussion management plan.

### **Is there anything that I can do to help prevent concussions?**

Ensuring that athletes understand safe-play techniques and follow the rules of their sport as well as encouraging good sportsmanship can help promote safe play. It is important to know that although helmets and mouthguards are important in preventing other injuries, there is no evidence to support their role in preventing concussions in sport.

**Questions or Concerns about a concussion? Please visit the Sport Medicine and Science Council of Saskatchewan's website [www.smscs.ca](http://www.smscs.ca)**