

Players Concussion Summary

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a temporary injury to the brain that cannot be seen on routine x-rays or scans. 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 or a blow to the body which causes a sudden jarring of the head may cause a concussion.

What are the symptoms and signs of concussion?

You don't need to be knocked out (lose consciousness) to have had a concussion

Thinking problems you may experience:

- Do not know time, date, place, period of game, opposing team, or the score in the game
- General confusion
- Cannot remember things that happened before and/or after the injury

Things that you may experience or feel:

- Knocked out
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Feel dazed, "dinged" or stunned;
- Loss of vision, seeing double or blurred, seeing stars or flashing lights
- Ringing in the ears
- Poor concentration, sleepiness
- Stomach ache, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting
- Poor coordination or balance, slurred speech
- Strange or inappropriate emotions (i.e. laughing, crying, getting angry easily)

Things other people may notice or comment on:

- You seem slow to answer questions or follow directions
- You seem easily distracted
- You seem more emotional
- You are not playing as well
- Your speech is slurred
- You have a blank stare/glassy eyed, "the lights are on but nobody is at home"

What should you do if YOU get a concussion?

YOU should stop playing right away.

Continuing to play increases your risk of more severe, longer lasting concussion symptoms, as well as increases your risk of other injury:

- You should tell the referee, your coach, parent or other responsible person that you are concerned you have had a concussion
- You should not return to play that day
- You should not be left alone
- You should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible that day
- You should not drive

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**:

- You should not exercise or do any activities that may make you worse, like driving a car, reading, working on the computer or playing video games. No cutting the lawn, moving heavy objects, etc.
- If mental activities (eg: reading, concentrating, using the computer) worsen your symptoms, you may have to stay home from work, college or school
- If you go back to activities before you are completely better, you are more likely to get worse, and to have symptoms last longer

Once you are **RECOVERed**, you can start a step-wise increase in activities (see following section "When can I return to rugby?").

It is important that you are seen by a doctor before you begin the steps needed to return to activity, to make sure you are completely better.

If possible, you should be seen by a doctor with experience in treating concussions.

Can it be anything more serious?

Anyone who gets a head injury should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible to have a diagnosis made. The doctor will usually give you instructions to go back to them or go to hospital IMMEDIATELY if you have worsening of symptoms such as:

- Drowsiness when normally awake or cannot be awoken
- A headache that is getting worse
- Weakness, numbness or decreases coordination
- Repeated vomiting or prolonged nausea
- Slurred speech, difficulty speaking or understanding
- Increasing confusion, restlessness or agitation
- Loss of consciousness
- Convulsions or fits
- Clear fluid coming out of ears or nose
- Deafness in one or both ears

When can I return to rugby?

It is very important that you do not go back to rugby or any other sport, if you have any concussion symptoms or signs. Return to sport and activity must follow a step-wise Graduated Return to Play (GRTP) which can be downloaded in full from the resources section of rfu.com/concussion

You should not go back to rugby/sport until you have been cleared to do so by a doctor

How long will it take to get better?

The signs and symptoms of a concussion often last for 7-10 days in adults but may last much longer, especially in younger players and children. In some cases, players may take many weeks or months to recover. Having had previous concussions may increase the chance that the person may take longer to recover.

Remember the 4 R's:

RECOGNISE

REMOVE

RECOVER

RETURN

DON'T BE A **HEADCASE** STOP! CHECK FOR CONCUSSION
HEADACHE EMOTIONAL APPEARANCE DROWSINESS CONFUSION AGITATED SEIZURE EARS AND EYES

These RFU Concussion resources have been developed based on the Zurich Guidelines published in the Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport, and adapted for rugby by the International Rugby Board

The information contained in this site is intended for educational purposes only and is not meant to be a substitute for appropriate medical advice or care. If you believe that you or someone under your care has sustained a concussion we strongly recommend that you contact a qualified health care professional for appropriate diagnosis and treatment. The authors have made responsible efforts to include accurate and timely information. However they make no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy of the information contained and specifically disclaim any liability in connection with the content on this site.