

Concussion: A Fact Sheet For Athletes

Did you know this?

A concussion is a brain injury that alters how your brain works

Concussions can occur in any sport

Early recognition of concussions and proper management leads to much better outcomes

Concussion results from a blow to your head or body that transmits a force to your brain – eg being hit by an opponent, falling onto the ground, being hit by a ball or stick

Most concussions don't result in a loss of consciousness

If you think you may have suffered a concussion it is VITAL you don't return to play that day and seek advice from a health care professional.

Each concussion is different and symptoms may be obvious immediately or delayed for minutes, hours or even a couple of days before they become apparent.

Common symptoms include: headache, confusion, difficulty remembering or concentrating, feeling off balance, feeling sluggish or foggy, just feeling "not quite right", nausea or vomiting, disturbance of your vision, slower reaction times, loss of consciousness, feeling irritable or down, sleep problems.

Why is it important that you report your symptoms?

Whilst recovering from this injury your brain needs rest. Continuing to exercise delays recovery and means you will feel unwell for a longer period of time.

Also during this period of recovery you are at a much higher risk of having another concussion and this places you at risk of longer term problems.

In very rare cases, in young athletes, a second concussion before the brain has had time to recover from the initial injury can cause catastrophic swelling of the brain and even death

So you think you may be concussed – what next?

Don't hide the injury – report it! Tell someone about it – e.g. your coach or team mates or parents. Don't let anyone pressure you into continuing to exercise.

Get the injury checked – go to see the most appropriate healthcare professional as soon as possible.

Look after your brain – your brain needs rest! This means rest from physical exertion but also from tasks that involve concentration eg. schoolwork, computer work or reading. It is vital that you rest until you feel normal again. When you feel normal you can begin the graduated return to play protocol.