

Title: Return to play guidelines for children and teenagers (ages 5-17) following sports concussions.

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What is a concussion? How does it occur? A concussion is an injury to the brain. These types of injuries occur when someone hits their head into something with force or at a high speed. Below are examples:

- car accidents with head injury (head to steering wheel or dashboard)
- a fall from heights
- sports injuries. An example of a common cause of concussions is in football when the quarterback knocked over and hits his head against the ground. It has been in the news a lot and has resulted in rule changes to protect quarterbacks.
- many other mechanisms

What are the symptoms of a concussion? A person who has had a head injury like this will have symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, vomiting, nausea, lack of coordination, poor balance, or sensitivity to light. Sometime a person will even see bright lights like they are seeing “stars.” These symptoms can cause headaches while reading. They will also make it so a person “thinks slowly.” Some people have memory problems or do not seem to make sense. They might seem confused.

Are kids affected differently than adults? Symptoms in children are thought to last longer than in adults. It is also thought that younger brains are affected differently. This is probably because their brains are developing.

What is the best treatment? The best treatment is rest. A person with a concussion should not think too hard for a while. They should also not play sports or other activities. The brain needs rest from deep thought because, like other body parts, it needs time to heal. The body needs rest because activities like sports can make the symptoms worse. The period of rest depends on how long a person has symptoms. When symptoms are gone a child may slowly return to play. Your doctor will help determine if your son or daughter has symptoms.

Are there any long term affects of a concussion? Most people with these injuries recover completely. Some will continue to have symptoms for longer periods of time. These patients should visit with a neurologist. This is a kind of doctor who treats problems of the brain and nerves. A person who has multiple concussions has increased chance of permanent damage to the brain.

How long will my son or daughter sit out before returning to play? Each child needs to be evaluated individually. They often recover at different rates. No one should return to athletics until their symptoms are gone. This might be a few days, a few weeks or longer. Discuss this decision with your primary care physician or team trainer. This is a decision should not be influenced by the needs of the team or demands from coaches.

Additional Resources:

- http://www.thinkfirst.ca/concussion_education.asp
- <http://www.cps.ca/english/statements/HAL/HAL06-01.htm>
- http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi/coaches_tool_kit.htm
- <http://www.casm-acsm.org/documents/PragueGuidelines.pdf>
- http://www.hockeycanada.ca/index.cfm/ci_id/7699/la_id/1.htm

Key Words:

- Concussion,
- “head injury”
- “head trauma”
- “brain injury”

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