

# Concussion Guidelines



**A great tool for educating  
associations, coaches, players, and parents!**

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**You would rather miss one game  
then an entire season!**

# Association Education for Proper Concussion Care



These tools are suggestions for associations in properly educating coaches, parents, and players on the seriousness of concussions. Associations play a vital role in the safety of their players.

## Coaching Education

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Associations should educate their coaches about the seriousness of concussions. Reiterate that although you cannot "see" the injury, it does not mean the injury does not exist.

Make all the concussions resources available to coaches, such as the "Coaches Fact Sheet", "Return to Play Guidelines", and options for player testing (i.e.. neuropsychological test).

Emphasize to the coaches that the safety of players is more important than winning a hockey game. If not cared for properly, concussions may have lifelong consequences that may not be noticeable for years to come.

## Parental Involvement

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Parents need to be involved whenever a player is injured. In order for that to happen, parents must know the signs and symptoms of a concussion, both on injury-date and post injury, and should be aware of possible resources for more information.

Associations should remind parents that coaches have the final say about return to play in a game if the coach suspects a concussion. Parents should ensure that their child is checked by an informed health care professional when a concussion is suspected.

Make the "Return to Play" guidelines accessible for all parents if their player does suffer from a concussion. Keep the dialogue open between the association, coaches, and parents while a player is recovering.

## Player's Own Safety

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Young hockey players tend to believe they are invincible. It is important they understand how severe head injuries are, and that it is their job to properly protect themselves. Players should securely fasten their helmet and always wear their mouth guard properly.

When skating, players should have correct body stance and keep their head up. This will help them balance themselves for contact and also be aware of their surroundings.

Players must be able to communicate effectively with their coaches and parents. It is crucial that players are aware of the signs and symptoms of a concussion and to alert their coaches and parents if any arise during a game or practice.

**You would rather miss one game than an entire season!**



## Concussions In Hockey Coaches Fact Sheet

### Possible Signs and Symptoms

OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF	SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE
Appears dazed or stunned	Headache or "pressure" in head
Is confused about assignment or position	Nausea or vomiting
Forgets general hockey plays (breakout, etc...)	Balance problems or dizziness
Is unsure of game, score, or opponent	Double or blurry vision
Moves clumsily	Sensitivity to light and/or noise
Answers questions slowly	Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
Loses consciousness (even briefly)	Concentration or memory problems
Shows behavior or personality changes	Confusion
Can't recall events prior to or after hit or fall	Does not "feel right"

### On-Bench Assessment

**The following are ways to assess a player if you suspect a concussion. This is not a diagnostic tool, and the player should still be seen by a health care professional.**

**MEMORY:** Ask the player questions they should know the answer to, such as date, period, opponent.

**FOCUS:** Talk with the player, are they focusing on the conversation? Able to speak with coherent sentences?

**PHYSICAL TEST:** Ask the player to touch their finger to their nose numerous times, is the player able to do this properly?

### Action Plan

**If you suspect a player has a concussion, you should take the following steps:**

- 1) Remove athlete from play, keep him/her supervised, and alert the athletes parents of their signs and symptoms.
- 2) Ensure athlete is evaluated by an informed health care professional. Do not try to judge the seriousness of the injury yourself.
- 3) Inform athlete's parents of MN Hockey suggested "Return to Play" guidelines, and give athlete's parents the "Parents Fact Sheet".

**If you think your athlete has sustained a concussion... take him/her out of play, and seek the advice of a health care professional experienced in evaluating for a concussion.**



## Concussions In Hockey Parents Fact Sheet

### What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. Concussions are caused by a bump or blow to the head. Even a "ding," "getting your bell rung," or what seems to be a mild bump or blow to the head can be serious.

You can't see a concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after the injury or may not appear or be noticed until days or weeks after the injury. If your child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms yourself, seek medical attention right away.

### What to do if you think your child sustained a concussion

**If you suspect your child has a concussion, you should take the following steps:**

- 1) Remove athlete from play and alert their coaches of any prior concussions.
- 2) Ensure athlete is evaluated by an informed health care professional. Do not try to judge the seriousness of the injury yourself.
- 3) Review MN Hockey's suggested "Return to Play" guidelines to ensure your child is healing their concussion properly.

### Possible Signs and Symptoms

OBSERVED BY PARENTS or GUARDIANS	SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE
Appears dazed or stunned	Headache or "pressure" in head
Is confused about assignment or position	Nausea or vomiting
Forgets general hockey plays (breakout, etc...)	Balance problems or dizziness
Is unsure of game, score, or opponent	Double or blurry vision
Moves clumsily	Sensitivity to light and/or noise
Answers questions slowly	Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
Loses consciousness (even briefly)	Concentration or memory problems
Shows behavior or personality changes	Confusion
Can't recall events prior to or after hit or fall	Does not "feel right"

**If you think your child has sustained a concussion... take him/her out of play, and seek the advice of a health care professional experienced in evaluating for a concussion.**

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# Return to Play Guidelines After a Concussion

These guidelines are meant to act as a suggestion for players after they suffer a concussion. The length of each phase varies depending on the severity of the concussion, and should be decided based on consultation with a health care professional. Variables include past medical history, age, weight, severity of symptoms, return of symptoms, etc... There is no exact return to play time line, however, it may vary from one-week to not being able to play again.

## Phase #1: Rest Period

Player should be taken out of play and referred to a health care professional. A concussed player needs to get plenty of rest. They should refrain from all physical and brain intense activity, including text messaging and video games. Parents are urged to speak with the player's school and teachers. Depending on the severity, players may need to stay home from school or limit homework and exams.

Players should continue to the next phase only if all the signs and symptoms of a concussion are gone. Please consult an informed health care professional if the signs and symptoms continue throughout the return to play protocol.

## Phase #2: Light Exercise

If the player does not have any symptoms, begin light aerobic exercise (5-10 min) that does not drastically increase heart rate. Walk, light jog and stationary bike are suggested. No weights, jumping, or skating. Add activity that increases heart rate & limited body and head movement. May return to school part-time with a limited workload and watch some TV.

## Phase #3: Sports Specific Exercise

If the player has been evaluated by an informed health care professional, the player may resume skating, but not participate in practice. May return to school full-time, gradually increase reading and homework, but avoid video games.

## Phase #4: Non-Contact Training Drills

Begin heavy non-contact physical activity, such as running, stationary bike and resistance training. Player is allowed back on the ice, including practice, but without contact. Continue to increase school workload.

## Phase #5: Full Contact Practice

Reintegrate back into full practices, including contact drills and scrimmage. Participate in all academic school activities.

## Phase #6: Return to Competition

Return to game competition, if cleared by an informed health care professional

**Players should continue to the next phase only if all the signs and symptoms of a concussion are gone. Please consult an informed health care professional if the signs and symptoms continue throughout the return to play protocol.**