

# CONCUSSION ADVICE SHEET

## WHAT IS CONCUSSION?

A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by a direct or indirect blow to the head or by the head striking something else such as the ground. A concussion can occur whether or not a person is “knocked out.” A concussion typically causes the rapid onset of short-lived impairment of brain function that resolves spontaneously with time. However, occasionally there can be a more significant or longer-lasting problem, and it is important that the symptoms from every concussion be monitored by team medics and doctors who understand concussion management protocol.

When you sustain a concussion, you may experience:

- Physical symptoms e.g., headaches, nausea, dizziness, tiredness, intolerance of bright light, symptoms with exercise. [JM1]
- Balance disturbances, concentration difficulties, memory loss, difficulty reading or using a computer
- Emotional changes such as mood swings, irritability and aggression
- Sleeping pattern changes – sleeping more or difficulty falling asleep [JM1]+ Symptoms with exercise



## WHAT SHOULD I WATCH FOR? (“RED FLAGS”)

What should I watch for? (“Red Flags”)

After evaluation by a sideline medic, it may be determined that you are safe to go home. If you are sent home, you should not be left alone. A responsible adult must accompany you. Symptoms from your concussion may persist when you are sent home but should not worsen substantially. The following symptoms and signs should be taken seriously and may warrant transport to hospital:

- Loss of consciousness
- Deteriorating conscious state
- Seizure or convulsion
- Severe or increasing headache
- Neck pain or tenderness
- Double vision
- Weakness, tingling/burning in more than 1 arm or in the legs
- Persistent vomiting
- Increasingly restless, agitated or combative state
- Visible deformity of the skull



### References:

- Patricios JS, Schneider KJ, Dvorak J, et al. Consensus statement on concussion in sport: the 6th International Conference on Concussion in Sport—Amsterdam, October 2022. *Br J Sports Med* 2023;57:695–711.  
- Echemendia RJ, Burma JS, Bruce JM, et al. Acute evaluation of sport-related concussion and implications for the Sport Concussion Assessment Tool (SCAT6) for adults, adolescents and children: a systematic review. *Br J Sports Med* 2023;57:722–735.  
- World Rugby Player Welfare <https://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org>  
- NCAA Concussion Fact Sheet for Students [http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/health\\_safety/ConFactSheetsa.pdf](http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/health_safety/ConFactSheetsa.pdf)

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## IS IT OK TO GO TO SLEEP?

Concussion often makes a player feel drowsy or tired. Once you have been medically assessed, if you are not getting worse (as noted above) it is alright for you to sleep. We do however want the responsible adult to be at home with you in case any problems arise. It is NOT advised to keep waking the person up at regular intervals.

## MAY I TAKE SOMETHING FOR PAIN?

Do not take any medication unless a doctor has told you to do so. Normally, we do not advise anything stronger than paracetamol (e.g., Panado). Avoid anti-inflammatories (e.g., Voltaren, Cataflam, Brufen etc.) and anything containing codeine (e.g., Myprodol)

## WHAT SHOULD I AVOID DOING?

Avoid drinking alcohol, being alone without a responsible adult or driving until a doctor has advised that you may. Continuing with normal daily home routines is encouraged rather than isolation in a dark room.

## MAY I EAT AFTER THE PRACTICE OR GAME?

It is fine for you to eat if you are hungry. Remember, some athletes do have a sense of nausea and fatigue, and often find that their appetite is decreased immediately after a concussion. Do not force yourself to eat.



## HOW LONG WILL I BE OBSERVED?

You must follow up with a medical doctor after your suspected or confirmed concussion. You must be monitored regularly, and your symptoms observed until they have completely cleared. You may continue with daily activities and can do some light exercise (e.g., walking at a slow pace), but should refrain from intense physical exertion including strength conditioning until released to do so by the medical staff. Return-to-practice and return-to-play decisions are made at the appropriate time by the medical doctors, and these may differ from player to player.

Additional testing will be considered (e.g., NeuroFlex®, computerised brain function testing, or specialised balance tests, exercise/exertion tests and neck examination) and this should be explained to you during your follow up visits. Determining if school activities (e.g., class, exams) need to be modified can also be evaluated by your doctor.



### References:

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## IF SYMPTOMS PERSIST, WHAT OTHER SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO ME?

Slight worsening of symptoms when reading or using screens is normal; concussion may make it difficult to **concentrate, study, and/or attend class**. In such a situation, it's important for you to discuss with your medical team and teachers, different options for receiving academic support during this time including:

- (1) short-term adjustments such as a shorter school day, working in an isolated & quiet environment and limited reading and computer work
- (2) extended accommodations to be made regarding your academic assessments including deferring or allowing for additional time.

These options usually involve disclosing some information about your medical condition to other School or University offices and/or personnel. Learn more about sport-related concussion and our management protocols:

[www.sportsconcussion.co.za](http://www.sportsconcussion.co.za)  
<https://www.neuroflex.io>  
<https://www.yourbrainhealth.net/>

| Designation                         | Name | Tel no.      | After-hours no. | Email / Website                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Doctor                              |      |              |                 |                                                                                                                                                            |
| Hospital                            |      |              |                 |                                                                                                                                                            |
| School/Club nurse                   |      |              |                 |                                                                                                                                                            |
| BokSmart SpineLine operated by ER24 |      | 0800 678 678 | 0800 678 678    | <a href="http://www.boksmart.com">www.boksmart.com</a>                                                                                                     |
| Sports Concussion SA                |      | 011-3047724  | 082-5746918     | <a href="http://www.sportsconcussion.co.za">www.sportsconcussion.co.za</a><br><a href="mailto:sportsconcussion@mweb.co.za">sportsconcussion@mweb.co.za</a> |

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YOUR BRAIN HEALTH