

# SUPPORTING A CHILD/ADOLESCENT WITH CONCUSSION:

## Your role as a coach

Helping children and adolescents with their concussion care and returning to play, school, sport and daily life activities requires the support of many. As a coach, you have an important role to play! If you are a coach who has never had a child/adolescent with a concussion, use this information to build your knowledge. For coaches who have had child/adolescent with a concussion, use this information to advocate for the care and support they may need.

**About this resource:** The information shared in this resource is based on the [Living Guideline for Diagnosing and Managing Pediatric Concussion](#). Coaches representing different sports reviewed and selected recommendations from this Guideline that they thought coaches should be aware of.

### ✓ Take action: Know your sport organization's role in concussion!

Enquire if your sport organization has a concussion policy/protocol and refer to it. Determine if:

- concussion education is provided
- staff are oriented to the policies/protocols
- policies/protocols are reviewed and updated regularly

If your sport organization does not have a concussion policy/protocol, talk to your administration about putting one in place.



## EDUCATION: Know about concussion

- A concussion is a brain injury caused by sudden shaking of the head. Any hit to the head, face, neck or body can cause a concussion. Concussions can happen from a fall, during a motor vehicle collision or sports, or during play at school, camp or in the neighbourhood.
- If the child/adolescent has a significant impact to the head, face, neck, or body and reports any symptoms or shows any of the visual signs of a concussion, you should suspect a concussion.

**Concussion symptoms:** Symptoms describe how someone feels after they are injured. Some symptoms may not appear until the next day. Common concussion symptoms the child/adolescent may experience are:

- Headaches or head pressure
- Easily upset or angered
- Feeling slow, tired or having no energy
- Blurred or fuzzy vision
- Feeling more emotional
- Difficulty working on a computer
- Dizziness
- Nervous or anxious
- Not thinking clearly
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Sadness
- Difficulty reading or remembering
- Nausea and vomiting
- Sleeping more or less
- Balance problems
- Having a hard time falling asleep

**Concussion signs:** Signs describe how a child/adolescent looks or acts when they are injured. Common concussion signs are:

- Lying still on the ground or ice
- Slow to get up
- Confusion or can't answer questions
- Blank stare
- Difficulty standing or walking
- Injury to the face or holding their head

### ✓ Take action:

Returning a child/adolescent to sport too soon after a concussion can lead to another injury. This may affect how they recover. If you think the child/adolescent has a concussion:

- sit them out
- contact the parents immediately
- recommend that the child/adolescent be seen by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner as soon as possible



## CONCUSSION RECOVERY: Understand the steps involved

- **Rest for the first 1-2 days after a concussion is key!**
- After this short rest, the child/adolescent should start activities (physical and thinking) that **do not**:
  - make symptoms worse
  - bring on new symptoms
  - increase the risk of a fall or hit to the head or body that could cause another concussion
  - increase the risk for another concussion (e.g. contact sport, full game play)
- As a coach, you can play an active role in supporting all children/adolescents with a concussion to make a *gradual and individualized* (step-by-step) return-to-sport. Use the steps below to guide this process.

Steps to return-to-school and sport can happen at the same time. It is important that the child/adolescent return-to-school full-time at a full academic load (i.e. writing exams without accommodations in place as a result of the concussion) **before** completely returning to full-contact sport or high-risk activities.



### Return-to-Activity/Sport/Play Steps:

Steps*	Activity	Example
1	Physical and cognitive activities that do not make the child/adolescent feel worse	Walking at home or in school
2	Light physical activity	Jogging or stationary cycling at slow to medium speed. No weight training
3	Sport-specific exercise	Running or skating drills. No drills with risk of head injury
4	Non-contact activities	Practice without body contact. Gym class activities without risk of head injury
5	Full-contact activities	Full activities/sports practices after doing full-time school and getting a medical doctor's note that states the child/adolescent is cleared to return to full-contact sport or high-risk activity
6	Return to all activities and sports	Normal full-contact game play

\* The child/adolescent can start these steps 1-2 days after a concussion, even with symptoms. Each step should take about one day. If symptoms get worse, the child/adolescent should go back to the last step. Try it again until the child/adolescent can do it without bringing on new symptoms or making symptoms worse. It is important to receive a note from the medical doctor or nurse practitioner that states the child/adolescent is cleared to return to full-contact sport or high-risk activity.





## STAY CONNECTED: Communicate with the child/adolescent, family and teachers

- If the child/adolescent has had a concussion, stay informed.
- Have ongoing conversations about concussion symptoms, medical management and recovery so that you can best support the child/adolescent through the concussion recovery process.
- If you notice that the child/adolescent is developing new concussion-like symptoms or sustains a new suspected concussion, recommend that the child/adolescent be seen by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Concussion recovery takes time, so it is important to have patience with the child/adolescent and the family during this process.



### Looking for resources?

Here are examples of resources that might be helpful and that you can share with your coaching colleagues and sport organization:

- [Concussion Recognition Tool 5: To help identify concussion in children, adolescents, and adults](#)
- [Parachute Concussion Guidelines for Parents & Caregivers](#)
- [Concussion Ed – Parachute Concussion Education](#)
- [PAR Concussion Recognition & Response: Concussion symptom recognition tool for coaches and parents](#)
- [CATT: Concussion Information Package for Coaches](#)