

# WESTON SOCCER CLUB



## CONCUSSION GUIDELINES & PROTOCOLS FOR PLAYERS & PARENTS

### What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury, or TBI, caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way your brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from a fall or a blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth.

### Why are Concussions becoming a big deal?

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. Concussions are becoming a big deal as doctors learn more and more about the brain and how concussions can drastically alter a person's short and long term health if not cared for and treated properly. We need to take steps to minimize the number of concussions, and properly treat them when they do occur, as repeat concussions for young people can result in long term problems that could change their lives forever.

### What does this mean for the WSC?

In our program, coaches and referees are REQUIRED to remove the player and sit them out if there are signs of a concussion after a blow to the head or the body during trainings and games. Any WSC player removed from practice or game as a result of a head injury or symptoms similar to those of a concussion shall not be permitted to return to any level of practice or game play to any extent until they have provided the club with a written and unconditional "Medical Clearance to Return to Play" from a licensed medical doctor. Medical clearance must be provided to the age director for that grade before a player can return to action.

The most appropriate course of action always is for coaches and officials to err on the side of caution for the player's sake, and when in doubt to sit the player out, regardless of the player's capability or game conditions. After a player with a suspected concussion is removed from practice or play, the decision about return to practice or play is a medical decision, for the sake of the player's safety and long-term health.

### Why should an athlete report their symptoms?

If an athlete has a concussion, his or her brain needs time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from the first—usually within a short time period (hours, days, weeks)—can slow recovery or increase the chances for long-term problems. In rare cases, repeat concussions can result in brain swelling or permanent brain damage. It can even be fatal.

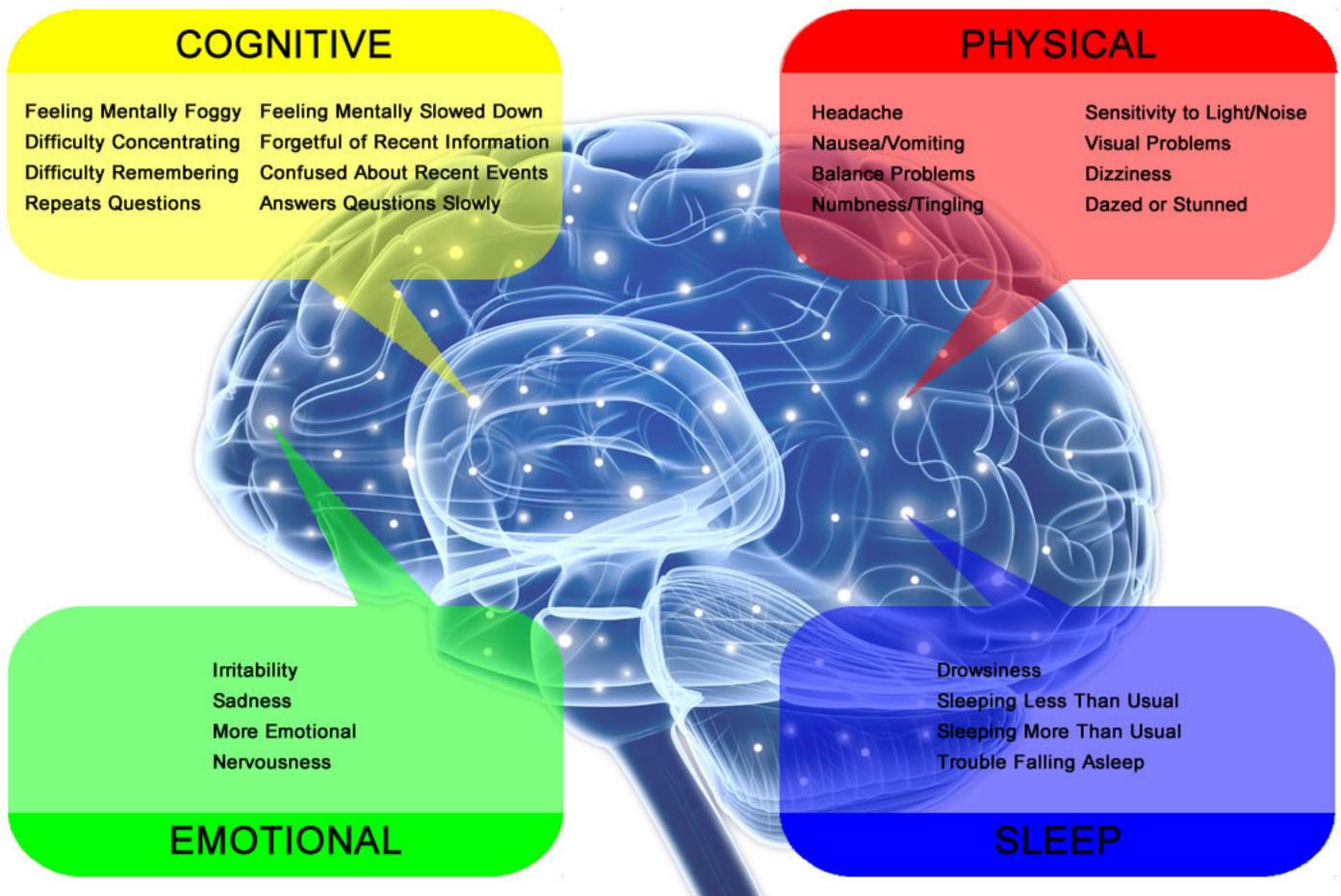
## PARENTS: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD HAS A CONCUSSION?

If you suspect your child has a concussion, make sure the coach has removed the athlete from play to observe for symptoms. If concussion symptoms are observed and/or reported by the player, do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Keep the athlete out of play the day of the injury and until a health care professional (experienced in evaluating for concussion) says he or she is symptom-free and it's OK to return to play.

Remember, concussions affect people differently. While most athletes with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have symptoms that last for days, or even weeks. A more serious concussion can last for months or longer.

Rest is key to helping an athlete recover from a concussion. Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games, may cause concussion symptoms to reappear or get worse. After a concussion, returning to sports and school is a gradual process that should be carefully managed and monitored by a health care professional.

[Click here](#) for the link to CDC concussion training.



## COACHES: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK A PLAYER HAS A CONCUSSION?

### REMOVER PLAYER FROM PRACTICE OR GAME

Per Mass. Youth Soccer Association policy, a player who (i) sustains a significant blow to the head or body, (ii) complains about or is exhibiting symptoms consistent with having suffered a concussion, or (iii) is otherwise suspected of having sustained a concussion, must be evaluated and cleared by a health care professional (HCP) (e.g., a pediatrician, pediatric neurologist, or sports medicine specialist) before the player will be allowed to return to play. The player will not be allowed to return to play until the coach is provided with written clearance from the player's HCP. The coach will inform their age group coordinator at WSC that he or she received or was shown the clearance form or note clearing the player to resume activities.

**Bottom line:** if you suspect a concussion remove the player from the practice or game immediately. Continued activity with a concussion could be fatal. You should never assume full health if any concussion symptoms are being shown. Ignoring symptoms and trying to "tough it out" often makes symptoms worse. Don't ever pressure a player into continuing to practice or play with a concussion. No win is worth player safety.

Coaches, please see MYSA's concussion policy and protocol, which is [here](#). WSC expects its coaches to adhere to the MYSA policy and protocol on concussions. Please review it carefully.

### INFORM THE PLAYERS PARENTS

Once the session or game has finished speak with or call the player's parents and notify them of the incident. Instruct them to take the player to get checked out by a doctor and inform them that for the player to return to soccer they will require a 'return to play' medical form signed by the doctor.

WSC asks its coaches to use their best judgment in these situations, recognizing that coaches are parent volunteers who, with very limited exception, are not medically trained or certified and may not be able to spot a situation in which a player may have sustained a head or other injury.

### INFORM THE AGE GROUP DIRECTOR

Inform the age group director at the WSC of the incident. Please provide the date of the (suspected) injury, when the parents/legal guardians were notified, how they were notified, and a brief description of the circumstances surrounding the incident.

### TRAINING

All WSC coaches are required to take the Center for Disease Control (CDC) online training (Click [here](#) to go to the CDC On-Line Concussion Awareness training) course and any other MYSA-mandated training(s). A copy of the certificate that a coach receives after completing this course must be sent to the WSC administrator prior to the first practice or game.

## PLAYERS: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE A CONCUSSION?

### DON'T HIDE IT. REPORT IT.

Ignoring your symptoms and trying to “tough it out” often makes symptoms worse. Tell your coach, parent, and athletic trainer if you think you or one of your teammates may have a concussion. Don't let anyone pressure you into continuing to practice or play with a concussion.

### GET CHECKED OUT.

Only a health care professional can tell if you have a concussion and when it's OK to return to play. Sports have injury timeouts and player substitutions so that you can get checked out and the team can perform at its best. The sooner you get checked out, the sooner you may be able to safely return to play. Remember, it's better to miss one game than the entire season.

### TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRAIN.

A concussion can affect your ability to do schoolwork and other activities. Most athletes with a concussion get better and return to sports, but it is important to rest and give your brain time to heal. A repeat concussion that occurs while your brain is still healing can cause long-term problems that may change your life forever.

# CONCUSSION CARE KIT

## CALL YOUR DOCTOR

IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS:

- \* Headache
- \* Dizziness
- \* Trouble concentrating
- \* Feeling overstimulated by lights and noises
- \* Memory loss, especially of the accident itself

Your doctor may want to perform neurological tests of your strength, balance, reflexes, and memory to rule out other brain damage – or may send you to the hospital for further testing.

## CALL AN AMBULANCE

IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- \* temporary loss of consciousness
- \* Vomiting
- \* Severe headache
- \* Trouble speaking or seeing clearly
- \* Numbness in your limbs
- \* Symptoms that persist or worsen

At the ER, a CT scan may be performed to assess you for brain bleeds. Be vigilant about any changes in mood, behavior, or cognitive abilities for a month after you hurt your head. Mark your calendar so you don't forget.

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## GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO REST AND RECOVER

The only cure for a concussion is physical and mental rest.

**DON'T** take aspirin or ibuprofen, which increase your risk of brain bleeds. For pain relief, take acetaminophen or ice your head.

**DON'T** push yourself mentally. Don't do anything that gives you a headache or makes you tired. Stay home from work/school if your doctor recommends it.

**DON'T** exercise. A subsequent blow to the head – second impact syndrome – can cause severe brain swelling and affect blood flow to the brain, which can be fatal. More than 90% of concussion symptoms improve within 3–4 weeks, but more serious cases can take longer. To avoid delayed healing or secondary injuries, wait for your doctor's all-clear before returning to your normal activity.

# 6 STEP RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL

PHASE	REHABILITATION	OBJECTIVE
Phase 1	Baseline	Patient must be on physical and cognitive rest with no symptoms for at least 24 hours
Phase 2	Increase heart rate	The goal is to increase the heart rate for 5-10 mins through mild activity such as walking, light jogging, or an exercise bike.
Phase 3	Moderate exercise	In this phase the goal is limited body and head movement through ore moderate intensity activities such as brief running or moderate weight lifting.
Phase 4	Non contact exercise	The goal is to increase intensity but avoid contact. Activities could include more intense running, stationary biking, or non-contact sport-specific drills.
Phase 5	Practice	Reintegrate into full contact practice.
Phase 6	Play	Return to competition.

Symptoms should be monitored at each phase and athletes should not progress if they begin to experience symptoms. Symptoms indicate the need for additional rest. When the athlete is not experiencing symptoms for a minimum of 24 hours, he or she may begin at the previous step where symptoms occurred. Individual athletes will progress through the phases differently and it may take some several weeks to complete all 6 phases.

Consider a referral to a concussion specialist for any of the following: parental concern; worsening symptoms; symptoms that persist after 3 weeks; multiple concussions (especially if occurring with less impact); or risk factors for prolonged recovery.

**A PLAYER CAN NOT RETURN TO FULL ACTIVITY WITHOUT A WRITTEN NOTE FROM THE DOCTOR CONFIRMING ALL CLEAR TO PLAY**

# USEFUL LINKS

## Resources and Links

U.S. Soccer's initiative, "Recognize to Recover" - [Click Here](#)

The CDC website is a great resource

Homepage - [Click Here](#)

How Can I Recognize a Possible Concussion - [Click Here](#)

What Should I do If a Concussion Occurs - [Click Here](#)

Quick Fact Sheet for Athletes to Help Them Recognize Symptoms - [Click Here](#)

Online Training Course for Coaches (mandatory) - [Click Here](#)