



CONCUSSION POLICY AND PROTOCOL* **ONTARIO VOLLEYBALL ASSOCIATION (“OVA”)**

*** This Policy does not constitute any medical advice and does not contain any medical diagnoses, symptom assessments or medical opinions.**

Preamble

1. Whereas the education and awareness of concussions is an important part of providing a safe sporting environment; and whereas the OVA is committed to taking all reasonable steps to provide a safe and secure sporting environment for participants in its programs, activities and events; and
2. Whereas this Policy is one of several tools that OVA will use to fulfill its commitment to provide a safe sporting environment and to protect its members from harm; and
3. Whereas nothing in this Policy shall be construed as abrogating the OVA’s right, responsibility, power and discretion to take any and all necessary steps to ensure a safe sporting environment for its members.

Purpose

4. The purpose of this Policy is to contribute to a safe sporting environment through education and by promoting awareness of concussion diagnosis and graduated return to sport of players who have suffered a concussion.

Compliance

5. This Policy complies with Rowan’s Law (Concussion Safety), 2018 and Regulation 161/19, and will be kept aligned with current Ontario Ministry guidance and national best practices (Parachute Canada 2024; Amsterdam 2022 Consensus).

Definitions

6. Individual – all categories of membership as defined in Section 2.1 of the Ontario Volleyball Association by-laws including but not limited to, clubs, athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, managers, administrators, directors and officers of the OVA, and parent/guardians of the athletes.
7. Concussion Awareness Resource – a concussion awareness resource prepared and reviewed annually by the Ministry or a Ministry recognized organization providing guidelines on concussion in sport. This resource provides information about concussions and the OVA will require signed acknowledgment by all Individuals the information has been reviewed.

8. Designated Person – an Individual that has completed the Concussion Awareness Resources within the last twelve months and is required to remove athletes from field of play when a concussion is suspected. Also required to receive confirmation from the parent/guardian of medical clearance from a physician or nurse practitioner before the athlete is permitted to return to unrestricted training, practice or competition.
9. A concussion:
 - a. Is a brain injury that causes changes in how the brain functions, leading to symptoms that can be physical (e.g., headache, dizziness), cognitive (e.g., difficulty concentrating or remembering), emotional/behavioural (e.g., depression, irritability) and/or related sleep (e.g., drowsiness, difficulty falling asleep);
 - b. May be caused either by a direct blow to the head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that transmits a force to the head that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull;
 - c. Can occur even if there has been no loss of consciousness (In fact most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness); and,
 - d. Cannot normally be seen on X-rays, standard CT scans or MRIs.
10. Suspected Concussion – the recognition that an individual appears to have either experienced an injury or impact that may result in a concussion, or is exhibiting unusual behaviour that may be the result of a concussion.

Definitions cited from, Ministry of Sport Concussion Guideline.

Concussion Awareness and Education

11. The OVA is committed to the long-term health of our athletes. Current and credible concussion resources will be accessible to all athletes, coaches, parents and stakeholders. The resources will include information on concussion prevention, identification, management and treatment. A link to the [Rowan's Law: Concussion safety | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/rowans-law), is available on the OVA website.
12. Volleyball Canada added the Coaches Association of Canada's 90 minute free online module "Making Head Way" to its coach certification pathway. For any volleyball coach to receive "Certified" status at any National Coach Certification Program (NCCP) level "Making Head Way" is mandatory. The online module can be found here: [NCCP Making Head Way in Sport | Coaching Association of Canada | Association canadienne des entraîneurs](https://www.nccp.ca/making-head-way)
13. The OVA requires all coaches and club technical directors to meet the OVA Coach Eligibility Policy, prior to their registration as an OVA member, which mandates the Coaches Association of Canada 90 minute free online module "Making Head Way".

14. All Learning Facilitators that deliver the Grassroots Programming will have completed Coaches Association of Canada's 90 minute free online module "Making Head Way".
15. As required by Rowan's Law, to complete OVA registration, all Individuals must sign Concussion Code of Conduct and Review of Concussion Awareness Acknowledgement Form, (See Appendix A for forms), acknowledging they have reviewed the Ministry approved concussion awareness resources and agree to follow the code of conduct for concussions.

Club Requirements

16. Each club must have an administrator responsible for recording all concussion-related incidences. Each club team must have a Designated Person onsite for all events, competitions, practices.
17. If a concussion is suspected, the Designated Person is required to:
 - a. Remove the athlete - Immediately remove the athlete from further training, practice or competition.
 - b. Call 911 if Emergency - Call 9-1-1, if in their opinion, doing so is necessary.
 - c. Inform - If the athlete is under 18, inform the parent/guardian about the removal. Advise the athlete or parent/guardian that the athlete is required to undergo a medical assessment by a physician or nurse practitioner before returning.
 - d. Provide Protocols – Provide the athlete or if the athlete is under 18, the athlete's parent/guardian with Removal-from and Return-to-Sport protocols. See Volleyball Canada Concussion Protocol (updated April 2024).
 - e. Record the Incident – Provide appropriate details to club administrator responsible for the record of any incidences of an athlete's removal, related to concussions.
 - f. Confirm Return – Confirm the athlete suspected of a concussion has undergone a medical assessment and has not been diagnosed as having a concussion. Ensure the athlete only returns to training, practice or competition once medically cleared to do so.
18. If a concussion is confirmed, the Designated Person is required to:
 - a. Receive Medical Advice – Receive from the athlete or parent/guardian the medical advice or recommendations provided to them by the physician or nurse practitioner.
 - b. Disclosing Diagnosis – Inform the athlete or parent/guardian of the importance of disclosing the diagnosis to any other sport organization with which the athlete is registered or school that the athlete attends.
 - c. Record Progression – Provide to club administrator record of the athlete's progression through the graduated return-to-sports steps until the athlete or parent/guardian confirm medical clearance.
 - d. Medical Clearance – Receive confirmation from athlete or parent/guardian of medical clearance by physician or nurse practitioner before the athlete is permitted to move on to unrestricted training, practice or competition.

Event and Program Protocol

19. For the safety of the competitors and spectators at OVA events, warnings for all to be aware of their surroundings and to keep their heads up will be posted. See sample poster (Appendix B), “Heads Up” posters, along with recommended warm-up protocols at venues.
20. The OVA follows the Volleyball Canada Concussion Policy and Protocol, see Appendix C, for the following events:
 - a. Indoor Ontario Championships
 - b. Indoor Convention Centre and Grand Prix events
 - c. Beach Ontario Championships
 - d. OVA Beach Tour Grand Slam events
 - e. OVA hosted National Championships
 - f. Team Ontario Programs, including Athlete Development Camps
 - g. Regional Team Programming.

Medical Assessment

21. The OVA asserts that it is critical that any athlete, coach, official, parent, and stakeholder that has concussion signs and symptoms stop all activity immediately and be assessed by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

Graduated Return to Sport

22. The OVA recommends that a graduated return to learn and play protocol is followed for athletes diagnosed with a concussion. There should be no return to sport until the athlete has been medically cleared and has successfully returned to school / learning, if applicable, without worsening of symptoms.
23. When returning to play once medically cleared, a stepwise supervised program should be followed with stages of progression. An example of return to sport stages can be found in the Ministry of Sport Concussion Guidelines [Rowan’s Law: Concussion safety | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/rowan-law).
24. The OVA will provide current and credible return to learn and return to sport resources on its website.

Review and Approval

25. This policy was last approved by the Board of Directors of the OVA, January 26, 2026, and is effective upon approval.
26. This Policy will be reviewed no later than the third anniversary of the approval date specified in section 25, or sooner if legislation or medical guidance changes.

Appendix A

Ontario Volleyball Association

Concussion Code of Conduct for Athletes and Parents/Guardians (for athletes under 18 year of age)

I will help prevent concussions by:

- Wearing the proper equipment for my sport and wearing it correctly.
- Developing my skills and strength so that I can participate to the best of my ability.
- Respecting the rules of my sport or activity.
- Respecting the warm-up hitting protocol during all competition and training sessions.
- Committing to fair play and respect for all (respecting other athletes, coaches, team trainers and officials).

I will care for my health and safety by taking concussions seriously, and I understand that:

- A concussion is a brain injury that can have both short- and long-term effects.
- A blow to my head, face or neck, or a blow to the body that causes the brain to move around inside the skull may cause a concussion.
- I don't need to lose consciousness to have had a concussion.
- I have a commitment to concussion recognition and reporting, including self-reporting of possible concussion and reporting to a designated person when and individual suspects that another individual may have sustained a concussion (Meaning: If I think I might have a concussion I should stop participating in further training, practice or competition **immediately**, or tell an adult if I think another athlete has a concussion).
- Continuing to participate in further training, practice or competition with a possible concussion increases my risk of more severe, longer lasting symptoms, and increases my risk of other injuries.

I will not hide concussion symptoms. I will speak up for myself and others.

- I will not hide my symptoms. I will tell a coach, official, team trainer, parent or another adult I trust if I experience **any** symptoms of concussion.



- If someone else tells me about concussion symptoms, or I see signs they might have a concussion, I will tell a coach, official, team trainer, parent or another adult I trust so they can help.
- I understand that if I have a suspected concussion, I will be removed from sport and that I will not be able to return to training, practice or competition until I undergo a medical assessment by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner and have been medically cleared to return to training, practice or competition.
- I have a commitment to sharing any pertinent information regarding incidents of removal from sport with the athlete's school and any other sport organization with which the athlete has registered (Meaning: If I am diagnosed with a concussion, I understand that letting all of my other coaches and teachers know about my injury will help them support me while I recover).

I will take the time I need to recover, because it is important for my health.

- I understand my commitment to supporting the return-to-sport process and I will follow Ontario Volleyball Association's Return-to-Sport Protocol.
- I understand I will have to be medically cleared by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner before returning to training, practice or competition.
- I will respect my coaches, team trainers, parents, health-care professionals, and medical doctors and nurse practitioners, regarding my health and safety.

In addition to the commitment to the OVA Concussion Code of Conduct, Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018 states that prior to registration with any sport organization all individuals must review the applicable concussion awareness resources found at Ontario.ca/concussions.

The below links can also be used to access these materials:

[Ages 10 and Under](#)

[Ages 11-14](#)

[Ages 15 and Up](#)

You must review one of the resources once a year, and then confirm that you have completed the review every time you register with a sport organization.

Once you have reviewed these materials please provide a signed copy of the below *Concussion Code of Conduct and Review of Concussion Awareness Resource Acknowledgement Form* to your Club.

Note: this form must be completed prior to your/your child's registration with the OVA.



Concussion Code of Conduct and Review of Concussion Awareness Resource Acknowledgement Form

Under Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018, every sport organization will ask you to confirm that you reviewed one of the Concussion Awareness Resources in this website (Rowan's Law: Concussion safety | ontario.ca) before you can register/participate in a sport.

You must review one of the resources once a year, and then confirm that you have completed the review every time you register with a sport organization.

Sport organizations must also establish a Concussion Code of Conduct and individuals must confirm that they have reviewed the sport organization's applicable Concussion Code of Conduct prior to registration/participation in a sport.

By signing here, I confirm that I have reviewed the applicable Concussion Awareness Resource at Ontario.ca/concussions and that I have fully reviewed and commit to the Ontario Volleyball Association's applicable Concussion Code of Conduct.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (for individuals under 18 yrs of age) _____

Date: _____



Ontario Volleyball Association

Concussion Code of Conduct for Coaches and Team Trainers

I can help prevent concussions through my:

- Efforts to ensure that my athletes wear the proper equipment and wear it correctly.
- Efforts to help my athletes develop their skills and strength so they can participate to the best of their abilities.
- Respect for the rules of my sport or activity and efforts to ensure that my athletes do too.
- Respect for adhering to the warm-up hitting protocol during all competition and training sessions.
- Commitment to fair play and respect for all (respecting other coaches, team trainers, officials and all participants and ensuring my athletes respect others and play fair).

I will care for the health and safety of all participants by taking concussions seriously. I understand that:

- A concussion is a brain injury that can have both short- and long-term effects.
- A blow to the head, face, or neck, or a blow to the body may cause the brain to move around inside the skull and result in a concussion.
- A person doesn't need to lose consciousness to have had a concussion.
- An athlete with a suspected concussion **must** stop participating in training, practice or competition **immediately**.
- I have a commitment to concussion recognition and reporting, including self-reporting of possible concussion and reporting to a designated person when an individual suspects that another individual may have sustained a concussion.
- Continuing to participate in further training, practice or competition with a suspected concussion increases a person's risk of more severe, longer lasting symptoms, and increases their risk of other injuries or even death.

I will create an environment where participants feel safe and comfortable speaking up. I will:

- Encourage athletes not to hide their symptoms, but to tell me, an official, parent or another adult they trust if they experience **any** symptoms of concussion after an impact.
- Lead by example. I will tell a fellow coach, official, team trainer and seek medical attention by a physician or nurse practitioner if I am experiencing any concussion symptoms.
- Understand and respect that any athlete with a suspected concussion must be removed from sport and not permitted to return until they undergo a medical assessment by a physician or nurse practitioner and have been medically cleared to return to training, practice or competition.
- *For coaches only:* Commit to providing opportunities before and after each training, practice and competition to enable athletes to discuss potential issues related to concussions.

I will support all participants to take the time they need to recover.

- I understand my commitment to supporting the return-to-sport process.
- I understand the athletes will have to be cleared by a physician or nurse practitioner before returning to sport.
- I will respect my fellow coaches, team trainers, parents, physicians and nurse practitioners and any decisions made with regards to the health and safety of my athletes.

In addition to the commitment to the OVA Concussion Code of Conduct, Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018 states that prior to registration with any sport organization all individuals must review the applicable concussion awareness resources found at [Rowan's Law: Concussion safety | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/rowans-law).

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Note: this form must be completed prior to your registration with the OVA



Concussion Code of Conduct and Review of Concussion Awareness Resource Acknowledgement Form

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You must review one of the resources once a year, and then confirm that you have completed the review every time you register with a sport organization.

Sport organizations must also establish a Concussion Code of Conduct and individuals must confirm that they have reviewed the sport organization's applicable Concussion Code of Conduct prior to registration/participation in a sport.

By signing here, I confirm that I have reviewed the applicable Concussion Awareness Resource at Ontario.ca/concussions and that I have fully reviewed and commit to the Ontario Volleyball Association's applicable Concussion Code of Conduct.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (for individuals under 18 yrs of age) _____

Date: _____



Ontario Volleyball Association

Concussion Code of Conduct for Referees

I can help prevent concussions through my:

- Efforts to ensure that athletes wear the proper equipment and wear it correctly.
- Respect for the rules of the sport or activity and efforts to ensure that all coaches and athletes adhere to those rules.
- Enforcement of the warm-up hitting protocol during all competition and training sessions.
- Commitment to fair play and respect for all (respecting athletes, coaches, team trainers, other referees and any other participants).

I will care for the health and safety of all participants by taking concussions seriously. I understand that:

- A concussion is a brain injury that can have both short- and long-term effects.
- A blow to the head, face, or neck, or a blow to the body may cause the brain to move around inside the skull and result in a concussion.
- A person doesn't need to lose consciousness to have had a concussion.
- Any participant with a suspected concussion should stop participating in training, practice or competition **immediately**.
- I have a commitment to concussion recognition and reporting, including self-reporting of possible concussion and reporting to a designated person when an individual suspects that another individual may have sustained a concussion.
- Continuing to participate in any competition or sporting activity with a suspected concussion increases a person's risk of more severe, longer lasting symptoms, and increases their risk of other injuries or even death.

I will create an environment where participants feel safe and comfortable speaking up. I will:

- Encourage participants not to hide their symptoms, but to tell me, a coach, parent or another adult they trust if they experience **any** symptoms of concussion after an impact.
-

- Lead by example. I will tell a fellow referee, coach, team trainer and seek medical attention by a physician or nurse practitioner if I am experiencing any concussion symptoms.
- Understand and respect that any athlete with a suspected concussion must be removed from sport and not permitted to return until they undergo a medical assessment by a physician or nurse practitioner and have been medically cleared to return to training, practice or competition.

I will support all participants to take the time they need to recover.

- I understand my commitment to supporting the return-to-sport process.
- I understand that participants will have to be cleared by a physician or nurse practitioner before returning to sport.
- I will respect my fellow referees, coaches, team trainers, parents, physicians and nurse practitioners and any decisions made with regards to the health and safety of participants.

In addition to the commitment to the OVA Concussion Code of Conduct, Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018 states that prior to registration with any sport organization all individuals must review the applicable concussion awareness resources found at Ontario.ca/concussions.

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You must review one of the resources once a year, and then confirm that you have completed the review every time you register with a sport organization.

Sport organizations must also establish a Concussion Code of Conduct and individuals must confirm that they have reviewed the sport organization's applicable Concussion Code of Conduct prior to registration/participation in a sport.

By signing here, I confirm that I have reviewed the applicable Concussion Awareness Resource at Ontario.ca/concussions and that I have fully reviewed and commit to the Ontario Volleyball Association's applicable Concussion Code of Conduct.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (for individuals under 18 yrs of age) _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Sample “HEADS UP!” Poster

HEADS UP!

ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK

During warmups and game play, volleyballs are moving at high velocity from multiple directions. Balls will leave the playing surface and can cause significant injury.

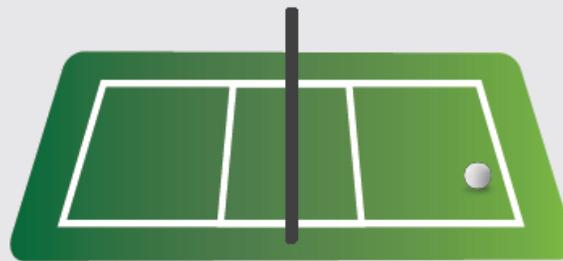
If you choose to enter the gymnasium, please be aware of your surroundings at all times.

The OVA, venue and event host are not responsible for any damages incurred.



MANDATORY WARM UP

The hitting warm-up is an important part of game preparation; however, it does come with risks for both athletes and spectators. To reduce these risks, we strongly recommend teams follow these mandatory OVA warm-up protocols during non-OVA events and club practices as well.



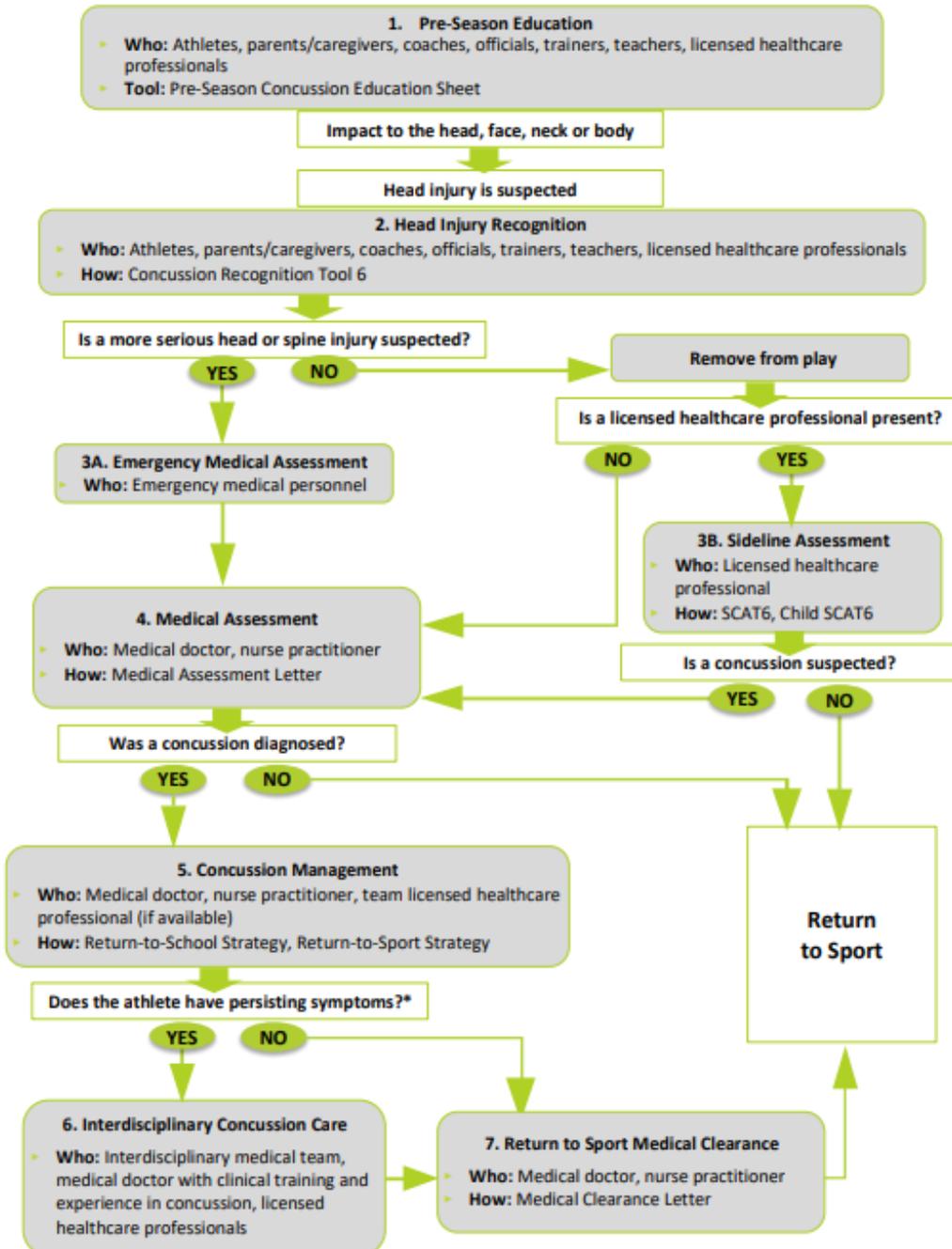
Attacking Side

Retrieving Side

- 1** Athletes remain on one side of the net during a hitting warm-up and those not hitting retrieve the balls on the opposite side
- 2** Athletes are permitted to pass on court (either side) during the serving portion of warm-ups but must stay on the same side during hitting warm-ups
- 3** Coaches are not permitted inside the court on the retrieving side.
- 4** Athletes must not cross under the net during hitting warm-ups into the direct path of the balls
- 5** Athletes must run around the outside of the court to retrieve balls
- 6** Designate one side of the court as the retrieving side and ask spectators to avoid sitting in this area
- 7** Hitting should be directed away from courts with active games and from spectator seating if possible
- 8** Warming up with balls is only permitted on court prior to matches



Volleyball Canada Concussion Pathway



*Persisting symptoms: lasting longer than 4 weeks

VC Concussion Protocol - April 2024

17



Medical Assessment Letter

Date: _____ Athlete's name: _____

To whom it may concern,

Athletes who sustain a suspected concussion should be managed according to the *Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport*. Accordingly, I have personally completed a Medical Assessment on this patient.

Results of Medical Assessment

- This patient has not been diagnosed with a concussion and can resume full participation in school, work, and sport activities without restriction.
- This patient has not been diagnosed with a concussion, but the assessment led to the following diagnosis and recommendations:

- This patient has been diagnosed with a concussion.

The goal of concussion management is to allow complete recovery of the patient's concussion by promoting a safe and gradual return to school, work and sport activities. The patient has been instructed to avoid activities that could potentially place them at risk of another concussion or head injury until they have been provided with a *Medical Clearance Letter* from a medical doctor or nurse practitioner in accordance with the *Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport*.

Other comments:

Thank-you very much in advance for your understanding.

Yours Sincerely,

Signature/print _____ M.D. / N.P. (circle appropriate designation)*

**In rural, remote or northern regions, the Medical Assessment Letter may be completed by a nurse with pre-arranged access to a medical doctor or nurse practitioner. Forms completed by other licensed healthcare professionals should not otherwise be accepted.*

VC Concussion Protocol - April 2024

19

We recommend that this document be provided to the athlete without charge.



Return-to-School Strategy

The *Return-to-School Strategy* should be used to help students make a gradual return to school activities. Progression through the steps will look different for each student. It is common for symptoms to worsen **mildly and briefly** with activity. If the student’s symptoms worsen more than this, pause and adapt activities as needed.

Step	Activity	Description	Goal of each step
1	Activities of daily living and relative rest (first 24-48 hours)	Typical activities at home (e.g. preparing meals, social interactions, light walking). Minimize screen time.	Gradual reintroduction of typical activities
2	School activities with encouragement to return to school (as tolerated)	Homework, reading or other light cognitive activities at school or home. Take breaks and adapt activities as needed. Gradually resume screen time, as tolerated.	Increase tolerance to cognitive work and connect socially with peers
3	Part-time or full days at school with accommodations	Gradually reintroduce schoolwork. Part-time school days with access to breaks and other accommodations may be required. Gradually reduce accommodations related to the concussion and increase workload.	Increase academic activities
4	Return to school full-time	Return to full days at school and academic activities, without accommodations related to the concussion.	Return to full academic activities

Return-to-Sport Strategy

The Return-to-Sport Strategy should be used to help the athlete to make a gradual return to sport activities. The athlete should spend a minimum of 24 hours at each step before progressing to the next. It is common for symptoms to worsen **mildly and briefly** with activity and this is acceptable through steps 1 to 3. If the athlete’s symptoms worsen more than this, they should stop the activity and try resuming the next day at the same step. It is important that athletes return to full-time school activities, if applicable, and provide their coach with a Medical Clearance Letter before progressing to step 4.

Step	Activity	Description	Goal of each step
1	Activities of daily living and relative rest (first 24-48 hours)	Typical activities at home (e.g. preparing meals, social interactions, light walking). Minimize screen time.	Gradual reintroduction of typical activities.
2	2A: Light effort aerobic exercise 2B: Moderate effort aerobic exercise	Walking or stationary cycling at slow to medium pace. May begin light resistance training. Gradually increase intensity of aerobic activities, such as stationary cycling and walking at a brisk pace.	Increase heart rate.
3	Individual sport-specific activities, without risk of inadvertent head impact	Add sport-specific activities (e.g., running, changing direction, individual drills). Perform activities individually and under supervision.	Increase the intensity of aerobic activities and introduce low-risk sport-specific movements.
Medical clearance			



4	Non-contact training drills and activities	Exercises with no body contact at high intensity. More challenging drills and activities (e.g., passing drills, multi-athlete training and practices).	Resume usual intensity of exercise, co-ordination and activity-related cognitive skills.
5	Return to all non-competitive activities, full-contact practice and physical education activities	Progress to higher-risk activities including typical training activities, full-contact sport practices and physical education class activities. Do not participate in competitive gameplay.	Return to activities that have a risk of falling or body contact, restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff.
6	Return to sport	Unrestricted sport and physical activity	

Tables adapted from: Patricios, Schneider et al., 2023; Reed, Zemek et al., 2023