



Concussion - Return to Play Protocol

Concussion is a serious event, but you can recover fully from such an injury if the brain is given enough time to rest and recuperate. Returning to normal activities, including sport participation, is a step-wise process that requires patience, attention and caution.

Each step must take a **minimum of between one day and one week** but could last longer, depending on the player and their specific situation.

If an athlete has any symptoms of a concussion (i.e. headache, feeling sick to their stomach) that reoccur, either with activity or later that day, they should **STOP** the activity immediately and return to **REST** until the symptoms resolve for a minimum of 24 hours.

The athlete should be seen by a doctor and cleared, before starting the step-wise protocol again. This protocol **MUST** be individualized to the athlete, to their specific injury and to returning to soccer.

CUFC will NOT allow players to return to practices or games without written medical clearance.

Symptom-free for 1 week	Symptom-free 1-4 weeks	Symptom-free +4 weeks
REST for one more week after symptom free.	REST for one more week after symptom free.	Begin STEP 2 (4 weeks after injury)
↓	↓	↓
STEP 2	STEP 2	DO NOT progress to STEP 3 until symptom free & cleared by a physician.
↓	↓	↓
Take at least 24 hours for each step.	Take at least 1 week for each step.	Take at least 1 week for each step.

STEP 1 - IMMEDIATELY: NO activity, only complete rest

Refrain from physical activity until symptoms are gone. Once symptoms are gone, a physician, preferably one with experience managing concussions, **MUST** be consulted and written permission obtained, before beginning a step-wise return to play process.

STEP 2: Light aerobic exercise

Begin activities such as walking or stationary cycling, 10-15 minutes. The player should be supervised by someone who can help monitor for symptoms and signs. No resistance training or weightlifting. The duration and intensity of the aerobic exercise can be gradually increased over time if no symptoms or signs return during the exercise or the next day.

If symptoms reoccur - rest until symptoms have resolved.

If symptoms persist - consult a physician.

No symptoms - Proceed to Step 3.

STEP 3: Sport-specific activities - NO CONTACT

Running activities can begin at Step 3, 20-30 minutes. There should be **NO** body contact or other jarring motions, such as high speed stops, jumping or heading.

If symptoms reoccur - rest until symptoms have resolved.

If symptoms persist - consult a physician.

No symptoms - Proceed to Step 4.

Proceed to Step 4 only after medical clearance.

STEP 4: Begin Soccer Drills - NO CONTACT.

NO heading, tackling or scrimmages.

Start activities (i.e. passing, shooting or dribbling) with one other teammate and progress to full team by the end of Step 4.

If symptoms reoccur - rest until symptoms have resolved.

If symptoms persist - consult a physician.

No symptoms - The time needed to progress from non-contact exercise will vary with the severity of the concussion and with each player.

STEP 5: Begin drills with BODY CONTACT.

If symptoms reoccur - rest until symptoms have resolved.

If symptoms persist - consult a physician.

No symptoms - Proceed to Step 6.

STEP 6: Return to Game play.



WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that cannot be seen on routine x-rays, CT scans or MRI's. It affects the way a person may think, act and remember things for a short time and can cause a variety of symptoms

HOW IS A CONCUSSION TREATED?

THE MOST IMPORTANT TREATMENT FOR A CONCUSSION IS REST.

The child should not exercise, go to school or do any activities that may make them worse, like riding a bike, play wrestling, reading, working on the computer or playing video games. If your child goes back to activities before they are completely better, they are more likely to get worse, and to have symptoms longer.

Even though it is very hard for an active child to rest, this is the most important step.

Once your child is completely better at rest (all symptoms have resolved), they can start a step-wise increase in activities. It is important that your child is seen by a doctor before they begin the steps needed to return to activity, to make sure they are completely symptom free. If possible, your child should be seen by a doctor with experience in treating concussions.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE FOR TO GET BETTER?

The signs and symptoms of a concussion often last for 7-10 days but may last much longer. In some cases, children may take many weeks or months to heal. Having had previous a concussion(s) increases the chance that a person may take longer to heal.

WHEN CAN MY CHILD RETURN TO SPORT?

It is very important that your child not go back to sports if he/she has any concussion symptoms or signs. Return to sport and activity must follow a step-wise approach.

TO WHOM DO THESE GUIDELINES APPLY?

These guidelines were developed for children over the age of 10. Younger may require special guidelines and more conservative treatment and care. Return to play guidelines should be at the discretion of a physician.

NEVER RETURN TO PLAY IF YOU STILL HAVE SYMPTOMS!

A player who returns to active play before full recovery from the first concussion is at high risk of sustaining another concussion, with symptoms that maybe increased and prolonged.

HOW LONG DOES THIS PROCESS TAKE?

These steps do not correspond to days! It may take many days to progress through one step, especially if the concussion is severe. As soon as symptoms appear, the player should return to rest until symptoms have resolved and wait at least one more day before attempting any activity.

The only way to heal a brain is to rest it.

HOW DO I FIND THE RIGHT DOCTOR?

When dealing with concussions, it is important to see a doctor who is knowledgeable in concussion management. This might include your physician or someone such as a sports medicine specialist. Your family doctor maybe required to submit a referral to see a specialist. Contact the Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine (CASEM) to find a sports medical physician in your area. Visit www.casm-acms.org for more information. You can also refer your doctor to parachutecanada.org for more information.

WHAT IF MY SYMPTOMS RETURN DURING THE STEP-WISE PROCESS?

Sometimes these steps can cause symptoms of a concussion to return.

This means that the brain has not yet healed and needs more rest. If any signs or symptoms return during the Return To Play process, they should **STOP** the activity and **REST** until symptoms have resolved. The player must be re-evaluated by a doctor before trying any activity again. Remember that symptoms may return later that day or the next, not necessarily during the activity!



IF SYMPTOMS RETURN - REST FOR AT LEAST 24 HOURS BEFORE RETURNING TO ACTIVITY AND GO BACK TO THE PREVIOUS STEP.

