

# A PLAYER'S BRAIN IS IN YOUR HANDS

KNOWING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION PROTECTS THEM. LET'S PLAY SMARTER, SAFER, RUGBY.

## WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

- Dazed, vacant or blank expression
- Lying motionless on the ground or very slow to get up
- Unsteady on feet
- Balance problems or falling over
- Incoordination
- Loss of consciousness or lack of responsiveness
- Confused or not aware of plays or events
- Grabbing or clutching of the head
- Convulsions
- More emotional or irritable

## WHAT THE PLAYER MIGHT SAY:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Confusion or feeling slowed down
- Struggling with or blurred vision
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue
- Drowsy, feeling in a fog or difficulty concentrating
- A feeling of pressure in the head
- Sensitivity to light or noise

## WHAT QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK PLAYERS:

### What questions you need to ask for players 13 years of age and older:

- What venue are we at?
- What team are you playing?
- What half is it?
- Who scored last in this game?
- Who did you play last week/game?
- Did your team win the last game?

### What questions you need to ask for children aged 5 – 12:

- Where are we now?
- Is it before or after lunch?
- What did you have last lesson/class? OR
- Who scored last in this game?
- What is your teacher's/coach's name?

Where there is any hesitation, uncertainty or one cannot verify the information, have the player permanently removed from the game or training session, and suspect a concussion.

## THE 6 R'S OF CONCUSSION:

### RECOGNISE

You need to be able to recognise the signs and symptoms of a potential concussion in your players. Learn them and know them!

### REMOVE

When you recognise any signs and symptoms, and suspect a concussion, remove the player immediately.

### REFER

Once you have permanently removed the player from the field, refer them to a medical doctor who understands concussions for a thorough clinical assessment.

### REST

Rest the player completely until they are totally sign and symptom free, and off any medication that might modify the symptoms of concussion. Use the minimum stand-down periods for each age group category, before entering the graduated return-to-play process.

### RECOVER

Full recovery of signs and symptoms is mandated before entering into the age-appropriate graduated return-to-play protocol.

### RETURN

To return to play safely following a concussion or suspected concussion, the players must be completely sign and symptom-free, be medically cleared by a doctor to do so, and then must also complete the age appropriate return to play protocol. For the purpose of concussion, full contact practice equals return to play.



## THE GRADUATED RETURN TO RUGBY AFTER CONCUSSION.

The graduated return to play protocol consists of **6 stages**, of which the first is the age-appropriate mandated rest stage and the last is the full return to rugby.

Each stage of the graduated return-to-play (GRTP) process is allocated a specific time period.

**Stage 1** is physical rest until no symptoms remain. For players **18 years old or younger**: a minimum of 2 weeks off, and even longer if any signs or symptoms remain. For players 19 years old or older: a minimum of 1 week off and the player must be sign and symptom free.

**Stage 2** is light aerobic exercise for 10-15 minutes where the player must be symptom free during the full 24 hour period.

**Stage 3** becomes more sport-specific and pushes the intensity up a bit, to where the player is exposed to running drills, where rugby-specific movement patterns are added, but still includes no potential head impact activities yet.

**Stage 4** progresses the player to more complex training drills where passing can be included. The purpose here is to combine non-contact exercise, coordination and decision-making, which increases the load on the brain.

Before entering **Stage 5**, which represents normal training activities such as full contact practice, it is critical that the player is cleared by a medical doctor to do so. They should also show no signs or symptoms during this stage and the full 24 hour period, before being given the final go-ahead to return to full match play or **Stage 6**.

If a player shows any signs or symptoms during any stage, they should consult with their treating medical doctor, and move back a stage to where they were previously sign and symptom free, and attempt to progress again after a minimum of 24 hours rest.

### Minimum stand down period after injury:

**Players 18 years old or younger** = 2 weeks rest post injury + 4 days GRTP (Earliest Return to Play = Day 19 post injury)

**Players 19 years old or older** = 1 week rest post injury + 4 days GRTP (Earliest Return to Play = Day 12 post injury)

## EMERGENCY NUMBER

For any potentially serious concussion, head, neck or spine rugby injury contact the toll-free **BokSmart Spine number. 0800678678** operated by ER24.

KNOWING WHEN TO TAKE A PLAYER OFF PROTECTS THEM. RECOGNISE AND REMOVE! CONCUSSION IS A BRAIN INJURY. LET'S NOT LOSE OUR HEADS ON THE RUGBY FIELD. IF IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT.