

TSA Concussion Policy



Holland Bloorview
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Concussion
Centre

This policy is aligned and consistent with the [Canada Soccer Concussion Policy](#) and the [Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport](#). This policy was made to enhance implementation of national guideline at the club and grassroots level.

PURPOSE AND DEFINITIONS

This concussion policy aims to ensure (1) all players with a suspected concussion are removed from play and seek medical assessment, and (2) all players with a suspected or diagnosed concussion do not return to full contact practice and/or game play until medically cleared to do so. *The TSA Concussion Protocol was made in collaboration with the Concussion Centre from Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital.*

- **What is a concussion?** Concussion is an injury to the brain resulting in a disturbance of brain function involving thinking and behavior.
- **What causes concussion?** Concussion can be caused by a direct blow to the head or an impact to the body causing rapid movement of the head.

STEP 1: RECOGNITION

Recognizing a suspected concussion and removal from sport

- a) **When should a concussion be suspected?** All players who experience any concussion reported signs and symptoms (*Figure 1*) or visual/observation symptoms (*Figure 2*) following a blow to the head or another part of the body is considered to have a suspected concussion and must stop participation in the TSA club sanctioned activity immediately. Symptoms of concussion typically appear immediately but may be delayed and evolve within the first 24-48 hours.
- b) **What is considered a TSA club sanctioned activity?**
 - i. Competing in TSA league or cup matches
 - ii. Ontario Soccer sanctioned competition
 - iii. Any team coach supervised training
- c) **A suspected concussion can be recognized in three ways:**
 - i. Reported signs and symptoms by a player– even if only one symptom (*Figure 1*)
 - ii. Visual/observable signs and symptoms from any team official (*Figure 2*)
 - iii. Peer-reported signs and symptoms from players, parents, and team officials (*Figure 1 and 2*)
 - iv. **If a player experiences a sudden onset of any of the “red flag symptoms”, 911 should be called immediately (*Figure 3*)**

TSA Concussion Policy



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Figure 1: REPORTED CONCUSSION SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Headache	Feeling mentally foggy	Sensitive to light
Nausea	Feeling slowed down	Sensitive to noise
Dizziness	Difficulty concentrating	Irritability
Vomiting	Difficulty remembering	Sadness
Visual problems	Drowsiness	Nervous/anxious
Balance problems	Sleeping more/less than usual	More emotional
Numbness/tingling	Trouble falling asleep	Fatigue

Figure 2: VISUAL/OBSERVABLE SYMPTOMS

Lying down motionless on the playing surface
Slow to get up after a direct or indirect hit
Disorientation or confusion, or an inability to respond appropriately to questions
Blank or vacant look
Balance, gait difficulties motor incoordination, stumbling, slow labored movements
Facial injury after head trauma

Figure 3: RED FLAG SYMPTOMS

Neck pain or tenderness	Loss of consciousness
Double vision	Deteriorating conscious state
Weakness/tingling/burning in arms or legs	Vomiting
Severe or increasing headache	Increasing restless, agitated or combative
Seizure or convulsion	Focal neurologic signs (e.g. paralysis, weakness, etc.)

Note: The [Concussion Recognition Tool 5](#) is valuable for all first responders in recognizing suspected concussion and responding to more severe brain injury or potential neck injury.

STEP 2: REMOVAL FROM SPORT

Ensuring immediate and safe removal of a suspected concussion from activity

- a) **Who is responsible for removal from play?** If a suspected concussion occurs, it is the responsibility of the head coach to remove players with a suspected concussion from participation in the soccer activity immediately. However, all team officials (head coach, assistant coach, trainer, manager, assistant manager, match officials or executive member) hold a responsibility to recognize the signs and symptoms of concussion, and report the suspected concussion to the head coach. If there is doubt whether a concussion has occurred, it is to be assumed that it has and the player is to be removed from play. **If in doubt, sit them out.**
- b) **Monitoring the player:** Head coaches are responsible for ensuring the player with a suspected concussion is monitored until a parent/guardian is contacted and on-site. Players with a suspected concussion should not be left alone or drive a motor vehicle.

TSA Concussion Policy



Holland Bloorview
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Concussion
Centre

- c) **Red Flag Symptoms:** If there are any red flag symptoms or a neck injury is suspected, activate your Emergency Action Plan and call 911 immediately. The player should not be moved and should only be removed from the field of play by emergency healthcare professionals with appropriate spinal care training. More severe forms of brain injury may be mistaken for concussion. If any of the red flags symptoms (figure 3) are observed or reported within 48 hours of an injury, then the player should be transported for urgent medical assessment at the nearest emergency department.

STEP 3: REPORTING A SUSPECTED CONCUSSION AND REFERRING FOR MEDICAL ASSESSMENT

Completion and submission of the *TSA Suspected Concussion Report Form (Page 7)*

- a) **Completion of the *Suspected Concussion Report Form*:** Head coaches are responsible for completing the *Suspected Concussion Report Form* immediately after a concussion is suspected.
- b) **Submission of the *Suspected Concussion Report Form*:** Head coaches must provide copies of the *Suspected Concussion Report Form* to:
- i. The individual's parents/guardian to bring to their medical appointment
 - ii. The TSA: tsaleagues@torontosoccer.net or FAX: 416-783-5194
- c) **Referring for medical assessment:** Head coaches are also responsible to recommend to the player's parent/guardian that they see a **medical doctor or nurse practitioner** immediately. Players with suspected concussions may not return to any TSA activity until they've received medical assessment and submitted necessary documentation (*see steps 4 & 5*).

STEP 4: INITIAL MEDICAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment and diagnosis by a medical doctor (MD) or nurse practitioner (NP)

- a) **Seeking medical assessment:** If a player has been deemed to have had a suspected concussion, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to take the player to see a **medical doctor or nurse practitioner** immediately.
- b) **Required type of initial medical assessment:** In order to provide comprehensive evaluation of players with a suspected concussion, the medical assessment must rule out more serious forms of traumatic brain injury and spine injuries and must rule out medical and neurological conditions that can present with concussion-like symptoms and must make the diagnosis of concussion based on findings of the clinical history and physical examination and the evidence-based use of adjunctive tests as indicated. In addition to **nurse practitioners** the types of **medical doctors** that are qualified to evaluate patients with a suspected concussion include: **family physician, pediatrician, emergency room physician, sports-medicine physician, neurologist or internal medicine and rehabilitation (physiatrists)**. **Documentation from any other source will not be acceptable.**

TSA Concussion Policy



Holland Bloorview
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Concussion
Centre

STEP 5: MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS

Submission of medical documentation of concussion diagnosis

- a) **If a medical doctor/nurse practitioner determines that the player with a suspected concussion did not have a concussion:**
- i. Parent/guardian must take the written documentation from the medical doctor/nurse practitioner (highlighting that the player did not have a concussion), and provide this documentation to their head coach.
 - ii. It is the responsibility of each parent/guardian to submit all documentation to their head coach before the player is permitted to return to a full contact practice and/or game play in a TSA club sanctioned activity. Parents must send documentation at **least 24 hours before** the next game or practice, not the day of. Head coaches will not allow return until this has been received.
 - iii. Head coaches will send documentation to TSA: tsaleagues@torontosoccer.net or FAX: 416-783-5194
 - iii. Parent/guardian should continue to monitor the player for at **least 24-72 hours** after the event, as signs and symptoms may take hours or days to appear.
 - iv. Head coaches have the right to refuse a player to return to any TSA club sanctioned activity if they deem the player unfit to do so.
- b) **If a medical doctor/nurse practitioner determines that the player with a suspected concussion does have a concussion:**
- i. Parent/guardian must take the written documentation from the medical doctor/nurse practitioner (highlighting that the player has been diagnosed with a concussion) to their head coach.
 - ii. Head coaches will send documentation to TSA: tsaleagues@torontosoccer.net or FAX: 416-783-5194
 - iii. The player is to begin Stage 1 of the *TSA return-to-sport protocol*.

Note: Written documentation by medical doctor or nurse practitioner may be provided in any format from medical assessment. A recommended [Medical Assessment Letter](#) template can be found in the *Canada Soccer Concussion Policy*.

STEP 6: CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

Initial recovery and management

An initial period of **24-48 hour of rest** is recommended before starting the return to sport protocol. For management strategies read the [Concussion Handbook from Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital](#) and review the recommended resources on [our website](#). Children and adolescents **should not return to sport until they have successfully returned to full school schedule and workload**. However, early introduction of symptom-limited physical activity is appropriate.

Most players who sustain a concussion while participating in sport will make a complete recovery and be able to return to full school and sport activities within 4 weeks of injury. Players who wish to have support by a physician-led multidisciplinary team within the first four weeks of injury can seek [early care services](#) for their recovery. However, approximately 15-30% will experience symptoms that persist

TSA Concussion Policy



Holland Bloorview
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Concussion
Centre

beyond that timeframe. If available, players who experience persistent concussion symptoms for >4 weeks may benefit from a referral to a medically-supervised [multidisciplinary concussion service](#).

STEP 7: RETURN-TO-SPORT AND MEDICAL CLEARANCE

TSA return-to-sport protocol (Page 9-10)

- a) After an initial period of **24-48 hour of rest**, the player with a concussion must complete each stage of the *TSA Return-to-sport protocol*
- b) Parent/guardian and the player are responsible to ensure that each stage of the *TSA return-to-sport protocol* is followed appropriately and the required signatures are completed at each stage. Players must be able to participate in each stage's activities for a **minimum of 24 hours without experiencing symptoms during or after the activities BEFORE moving onto the next stage.**
- c) If the player experiences onset or worsening of symptoms during or after the activities in any stage, the player should stop that activity immediately, rest for 24 hours and return to the previous successful stage.
- d) Once Stages 1-4(B) of the *TSA return-to-sport protocol* have been completed, the player must receive **medical clearance** to proceed to *Stage 5: Full contact practice with team*. A player is not permitted to return to *Stage 5: Full contact practice with team* or *Stage 6: Game Play* until written permission by a medical doctor/nurse practitioner. In addition to **nurse practitioners** the types of medical doctors that are qualified to support medical clearance for concussion include: **family physician, pediatrician, sports-medicine physician, neurologist or internal medicine and rehabilitation (physiatrists).** **Documentation from any other source will not be acceptable.**
- e) Once medical clearance for *Stage 5: Full contact practice with team* is obtained, the parent/guardian must take the written clearance from the medical doctor/nurse practitioner (highlighting player is safe to return to full team practice and game play) and the *TSA return-to-sport protocol* with all signatures completed to their head coach before the player is permitted to return to a *Stage 6: Game play*. Parents must send medical clearance at least 24 hours before the next practice, not the day of.
- f) Head coaches to submit written medical clearance and *TSA Return-to-sport protocol* with signatures to the TSA head offices to the player participating in *Stage 6: Game play* tsaleagues@torontosoccer.net or FAX: 416-783-5194.
- g) Do not progress to game play until player has regained their pre-injury skill-level and player is confident in their ability to return to activity.
- h) Head coaches have the right to refuse a player to return to any TSA club sanctioned activity if they deem the player unfit to do so.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

This concussion policy aims to ensure (1) all players with a suspected concussion are removed from play and seek medical assessment, and (2) all players with a suspected or diagnosed concussion do not return to full contact practice and/or game play until medically cleared to do so. The above steps relate

TSA Concussion Policy



Holland Bloorview
Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Concussion
Centre

most directly to a player who sustains a concussion during a TSA club sanctioned activity and this injury is identified immediately. Not all concussions will be identified immediately and not all concussions will take place during TSA club sanctioned activity. Two alternative scenarios are presented below:

Scenario 1: A suspected concussion from a TSA club sanctioned activity is not suspected and/or reported until days or weeks after the soccer activity. **Enter at Step 3 (reporting a suspected concussion).** Immediately upon the concussion being suspected and/or reported to team officials, the head coach is to complete the *Suspected Concussion Report Form* and recommend that the player see a medical doctor/nurse practitioner immediately.

Scenario 2: A player is diagnosed with a concussion from a non TSA club sanctioned activity (i.e. school, other sports, non TSA club sanctioned games or training). **Enter at Step 5 (medical diagnosis).** Upon receiving diagnosis from parent/guardian, the head coach is to submit medical documentation to the TSA offices. As the concussion did not happen at a TSA club sanctioned activity, no *Suspected Concussion Report Form* needs to be completed.

Referring Documents:

1. *Suspected Concussion Report Form* (Page 7)
2. *TSA remove-from-sport summary* (Page 8)
3. *TSA return-to-sport protocol* (Page 9 & 10)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the TSA Concussion Policy please contact:

TSA Head Office:

TEL: 416-783-7575

FAX: 416-783 5194

EMAIL: tsaleagues@torontosoccer.net

TSA Concussion Policy is available at <http://www.torontosoccerassociation.ca/clubsite/?p=17583>