



What is a Concussion and How Do I Return to My Sport?

Sports-related concussions are more frequently reported in the media thanks in part to the notoriety of concussed NHL-ers Daniel Sedin and Sidney Crosby.

Concussions are a common sports injury usually caused by a hit to the head leading to a short loss of normal brain function. You do not need to lose consciousness to sustain a concussion. Concussion symptoms can include a headache or neck pain, nausea, dizziness, tiredness or light and noise sensitivity.

The therapists at **Body Works Sports Physiotherapy** have special interest in concussion management and safe return to play. Concussions are often poorly understood. We can teach you to understand what is going on and how to deal with it. Further, we will establish a safe return to play protocol for young athletes that is communicated to the athlete, the parents and the coaches.

This month, the **BC Physiotherapy Association** has put together 4 main physiotherapy tips for concussions and how to successfully return to play after a concussion. By following these physiotherapy tips for sports-related concussions, parents and coaches can be more aware of when a concussion has occurred and help to protect players from getting or causing a concussion. The 4 tips are:

1. Monitor the health of the athlete. Before the first practice, assess the athlete's baseline brain function (memory skills, concentration), and then re-test during the season to help identify the effects of any injury. Know if the athlete has had a prior concussion, if so have a physiotherapist help set up a program for a safe and prepared return to play.
2. Positioning and protecting the head: To prevent giving or receiving a concussion, young hockey and soccer players must learn to protect their heads and avoid dangerous angles of contact. Hockey players should always approach the boards on an angle, and never check from behind. Soccer players should "head the ball" correctly, and keep a protective space around their bodies to avoid bumping heads and straining necks.
3. Ensure a gradual return to play. If a young player does suffer a concussion its imperative that he/she does not return to play too soon; their brain needs time to heal. A physiotherapist can establish an individualized rehabilitation program that will help prevent the incidence of re-injury, guide the young athlete through the recovery process, and help determine when it is safe to return to play.
4. Train specifically for the sport. Hockey specific off-ice training exercises will improve control of the neck, spine and pelvis, and will help with skating, puck skills and safe body contact to avoid concussion. Soccer players (especially girls who are prone to concussions) should include a neck-strengthening program as part of their conditioning. Younger players should not practice "heading the ball" until they are adequately trained in the proper technique.

*Note: These tips can be adapted for other sports.

For more information on concussions and how physiotherapy can help contact us at **604-983-6616** or info@body-works.ca.