

Concussion Policy

What is Concussion?

Concussion is a type of brain injury caused by a blow to the head or anywhere on the body, which transmits a force to the head. Most commonly, it causes temporary impairment and the symptoms may develop over the hours or days following the injury. This means that it may be difficult to determine, by either staff, parents or medical practitioners, immediately after the injury whether a person is concussed. Cognitive functions in children and adolescents may be affected for up to the 2 months following concussion.

Concussion occurs most often in sports which involve body contact, collision or high speed. In most cases a person will recover from concussion without intervention, provided they have an adequate period of rest in order to recover.

Penola Catholic College's Policy

Penola Catholic College acknowledges that it is not feasible to eliminate the risk of concussion in sport. However, it is committed to responding to suspected or actual concussion in a way that facilitates the recovery of the student and does not put them at risk of further harm. It is our policy that:

- A student suspected of having concussion will be removed from sport and not allowed to return to sport that day;
- A student who has been hit in the head or the body showing some symptoms where concussion cannot be ruled out, will be treated as if they have concussion - *'if in doubt sit it out'*;
- The College will work together with parents to ensure that a student with actual or suspected concussion obtains medical attention and only returns to school and to sport under appropriate guidance;
- Any student who has a diagnosed concussion will not return to sport until 48 hours after all of the symptoms of concussion have stopped;
- When recovering from concussion, the priority will be for the student to return to learning before returning to sport;
- Students are encouraged to wear helmets, mouth guards or other protective equipment, even though they may not be instrumental in preventing concussion, as they do prevent other types of head injuries such as skull fracture and subdural haematoma;
- Staff will be trained in how to identify the possible symptoms of concussion and the immediate action they will need to take to ensure the safety of students who are suspected of being concussed;
- Staff will be briefed on how to treat a student returning to school and physical activity following a concussion; and
- A student who has been concussed who returns to school will be provided with a modified learning program if required, and a graduated return to sport.

Immediate Symptoms

The following symptoms may be present immediately after being hit:

- Loss of consciousness;
- Lying motionless, slow to get up;

- Seizure;
- Confusion, disorientation;
- Memory impairment;
- Balance disturbance;
- Nausea or vomiting;
- Headache or 'pressure' in the head;
- Visual or hearing disturbance;
- Dazed, blank/vacant stare; and/or
- Behaviour or emotional changes, 'not themselves'.

Staff will be issued with the Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool to assist them with making a tentative diagnosis.

Initial Response

There should be immediate referral to an emergency department if any of the following occurs:

- Neck pain;
- Increasing confusion or irritability;
- Repeated vomiting;
- Seizure or convulsion;
- Weakness or tingling/burning in the arms or legs;
- Deteriorating conscious state;
- Severe or increasing headache;
- Unusual behavioural change; or
- Visual or hearing disturbance.

For all other concussion symptoms, the following action should be taken:

- Immediate and permanent removal from sport or activity on that day;
- Take normal first aid precautions including neck protection; and
- Refer to medical practitioner as soon as practical.

Following Diagnosis of Concussion

Following a diagnosis of concussion, the student should have complete physical and cognitive rest. They should only return to learning after being symptom free for at least 48 hours.

The return to learning may require that the student be given a reduced work load and /or more frequent breaks. If there is a recurrence of concussion symptoms, the student should return to complete cognitive and physical rest. Return to sport should be graduated along the following steps, and any recurrence of symptoms will require a return to the previous step for at least 24 hours:

1. After the student has returned to learning without a recurrence of concussion symptoms, after 24 hours they may participate in light aerobic activity;
2. If there is no recurrence of symptoms after 24 hours, then the student may participate in basic sport-specific drills which are non-contact and no likelihood of head impact;
3. If there is no recurrence of symptoms after 24 hours, then the student may participate in more complex sport-specific drills which are non-contact (this may include resistance training);
4. A return to contact activities (not full training) should only occur a minimum of 14 days after complete absence of any concussion symptoms; and

5. A medical practitioner should review the student before the student returns to full contact training.

If there is no recurrence of concussion symptoms 24 hours after full contact training then the student may return to the sport.

Role of Parents/Carers

Parents/carers are instrumental in working with the College to manage student concussions. While watching students, parents/carers may also see an injury or a delayed sign or symptom that a College staff member or first aid officer did not witness and therefore provide important information.

Parents/carers are required to:

- Notify the College of all medical conditions including details regarding previous concussions and relevant medical conditions to ensure the school has the correct procedures in place; and
- Notify the College if the student has suffered concussion at a non-College event as well as measures put in place by a medical practitioner.

Where concussion occurred at College, the parent/carer should:

- Notify the College of the medical treatment and advice received from a medical practitioner;
- Provide clearance from the medical practitioner where requested by the College as a precondition to returning the student to sport; and
- Comply with staff directions for time out of College for the student's condition if required in accordance with this policy.

Incident Reporting and Record –Keeping

Staff must report any actual or suspected case of concussion as soon as practicable.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- staff training;
- communication and coordination with parents/carers;
- incident notification; and
- initiation of strategies to address students returning from concussion.

Discipline for Breach of Policy

Where a staff member breaches this policy in relation to returning the student to sport the College may take disciplinary action, including, in serious cases, dismissal.

Reference

Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool

Return to Sport Protocol for children 18 years of age and under

Return to Learn

Australian Institute of Sport and Australian Medical Association Concussion in Sport Position Paper

Sports Concussion Australasia Headsmart Sports Concussion Program

Sports Medicine Australia Position Statement on Concussion

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