

## RECOGNISE | REMOVE | RECOVER | RETURN

Following a head knock, one or more of the following may indicate concussion:

- A vacant or dazed look on the player's face
- Slower responses than normal
- Slurred or incoherent speech
- Forgetting events before or after impact
- Being unable to focus or easily distracted
- Being disorientated or confused (e.g. walking in wrong direction, not knowing time, date, place)
- Loss of co-ordination (e.g. stumbling, unable to walk in a straight line).
- Emotional confusion or behaviour changes (e.g. being aggressive or crying for no apparent reason)
- Feeling dazed or stunned
- Feelings of nausea (sickness)
- Double or blurred vision
- Ringing in the ears
- Headache
- Pupils in the eyes appear different in size
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish, groggy or dizzy

A player with a suspected concussion **must** be treated as if he or she is definitely concussed and has to get checked out as soon as possible!

If any of the following occur, medical treatment should be sought **immediately**:

- Loss of consciousness
- Repeated vomiting
- Severe neck pain
- Seizures (fits)
- Weakness, tingling or burning sensations in limbs

In all cases of suspected concussion it is recommended that a player is referred to a medical or healthcare professional for diagnosis and guidance, even if the symptoms appear to have gone.

Families and friends of players suspected of concussion should make sure they get checked out!

## CONCUSSION IN COMMUNITY RUGBY

While relatively rare, concussion can occur in all sports, particularly where there is full contact.

It's important to know the signs and symptoms of concussion and understand what to do if a concussion is suspected.

Once concussion has been diagnosed, it's also important to rest and recover in the right way, before returning to physical activity.

Community rugby players are responsible for their own health and must take concussion seriously and stick to New Zealand Rugby's return to play guidelines.

## CONCUSSION FACTS

- A concussion is a brain injury.
- All concussions are serious.
- Concussions can occur without loss of consciousness.
- All athletes with any symptoms following a head injury must be removed from playing or training and must not return to activity until all symptoms have cleared.
- Specifically, return to play or training on the day of any suspected concussion is forbidden.
- Concussion can be fatal.
- Most concussions resolve with the recommended period of physical and mental rest.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT  
CONCUSSION AND MANAGING A RETURN TO  
PLAYING, CHECK OUT [RUGBYSMART.CO.NZ](http://RUGBYSMART.CO.NZ)

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Community Rugby  
NEW ZEALAND'S BIGGEST TEAM



## RETURNING TO PLAY FOLLOWING CONCUSSION

RECOGNISE | REMOVE | RECOVER | RETURN

[RUGBYSMART.CO.NZ](http://RUGBYSMART.CO.NZ)

## RECOGNISE | REMOVE | RECOVER | RETURN

Rest is the cornerstone of concussion treatment. This involves resting your body (this is known as ‘physical rest’) and resting your brain (known as ‘cognitive rest’).

Avoid:

- Physical activities such as running, cycling, swimming etc
- Mental activities that require concentration, such as driving, studying, reading or playing electronic games

Medical or approved healthcare provider clearance is recommended before re-starting activity. Before re-starting activity you must be symptom free at rest for at least 24 consecutive hours - without medication or anything else that might mask the symptoms.

Children and teenagers need to be managed more carefully than adults. NZR and the IRB recommend children and teenagers should not play or undertake contact training for a minimum of two weeks following symptoms disappearing. Students must have returned to school or full studies before re-commencing exercise.

After the minimum rest period AND if symptom free at rest a **GRADUATED RETURN TO PLAY (GRTP)** programme must be followed.

AGE	MIN. REST	GRTP**	MIN. TIMEOUT
U6-U19*	14 days	8 days	23 days
ADULT	14 days	6 days	21 days

\* Players 18 years old and younger playing adult rugby must follow **age grade** guidelines

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A player may not return to playing until:

1. All symptoms have subsided; AND
2. They have completed the minimum rest period required; AND
3. They have followed the GRTP protocol; AND
4. They have been cleared by a doctor to return.

### GRADUATED RETURN TO PLAY (GRTP)

All players diagnosed with a concussion or suspected concussion must go through the GRTP described in this brochure - for more information talk to your Coach, your local Union, contact New Zealand Rugby or check out [rugbysmart.co.nz](http://rugbysmart.co.nz)

The NZR minimum rest periods and different length GRTP stages for different ages are summarised below:

#### Players 18 years and under

- Minimum rest period 2 weeks and symptom free
- GRTP with each stage lasting 48 hours
- Earliest return to play - Day 23 post injury

#### Players 19 years and over

- Minimum rest period 2 weeks and symptom free
- GRTP with each stage lasting 24 hours
- Earliest return to play: Day 21 post injury

A GRTP should only commence if the player:

- has completed the minimum rest period for the player’s age grade; and
- is symptom free and not taking any medication that modifies the symptoms of concussion.

Medical or approved healthcare professional clearance is required before you start your GRTP.

The management of a GRTP should be undertaken on a case by case basis.

## GRADUATED RETURN TO PLAY STAGES

REHAB STAGE	MINIMUM TIME	
	19 YEARS+	UNDER 19
1. Complete mental and physical rest until symptoms have cleared	14 days	14 days
2. Once symptom-free, light aerobic exercise, such as walking or stationary cycling	2 days	2 days
3. Rugby-specific exercise, such as running or ball-handling activities. NO head impact activities!	1 day	2 days
4. Non-contact training drills until medical clearance given	1 day	2 days
5. Once medical clearance has been given, full contact training	2 days	2 days
6. Return to play		

## GRADUATED RETURN TO PLAY PLANNER

DAY-BY-DAY (AT THE EARLIEST)	19 YEARS+	UNDER 19
DAY 1 Post Injury to DAY 14	Rest	Rest
DAY 15 & 16	Light exercise	Light exercise
DAY 17	Rugby exercise	Rugby exercise
DAY 18	Non-contact training drills	Rugby exercise
DAY 19	Full-contact training	Non-contact training drills
DAY 20	Full-contact training	Non-contact training drills
DAY 21	RETURN TO PLAY	Full-contact training
DAY 22		Full-contact training
DAY 23		RETURN TO PLAY