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## CONCUSSION ADVICE SHEET

### What Is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of brain injury that happens when you get a bump to the body or hit to the head—or even if your head hits the ground or something else. You don't have to be knocked out for it to be serious.

Basically, your brain gets shaken up a bit, and that can mess with how it works for a while. Most of the time, these effects can happen quickly, don't last long and get better on their own. But sometimes, symptoms can stick around or worsen, so it's important that you're checked out by medical staff who know how to manage concussions properly.

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### What You Might Feel After a Concussion

Here are some common things you might notice if you've had a concussion:

- **Body stuff:** Headaches, feeling sick, dizzy, super tired, sensitive to light, or struggling when you try to exercise
- **Balance & brain:** Feeling off-balance, having trouble focusing, forgetting things, or finding it hard to read or use your phone/computer
- **Emotions:** Mood swings, feeling irritable or easily annoyed, or even acting a bit more aggressive than usual
- **Sleep:** Sleeping a lot more than usual, or not being able to fall asleep at all
- **Activity issues:** Sometimes, symptoms pop up (or get worse) when you try to be active too soon

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## What Should I Watch Out For? (**RED FLAGS**)

After a concussion, a medic might decide you're okay to head home—but it's very important that you're **not left alone**. Make sure a responsible adult is with you just in case anything changes.

It's normal to still feel a bit off when you leave, but your symptoms **shouldn't get worse**. If any of the following signs show up or start to increase, don't wait—**get medical help immediately** or go to the hospital:

-  You lose consciousness (even briefly)
-  You seem more confused or less alert than before
-  You have a seizure or convulsions
-  Your headache gets really bad or keeps getting worse
-  You have neck pain or tenderness
-  You see double or your vision is weird
-  You feel weakness, tingling, or burning in your arms or legs
-  You're vomiting repeatedly
-  You become restless, aggressive, or agitated
-  You notice any strange bump or dent in your skull

If you're seeing these **RED FLAGS**—**don't wait it out. Get help**. It's always better to be safe when it comes to head injuries.

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## Can I Go to Sleep After a Concussion?

Totally. It's completely normal to feel sleepy or tired after a concussion. If a medic has checked you out and everything looks stable for a couple of hours after the injury, it's **safe for you to rest or sleep**.

The only thing we ask is that you're not left alone—**someone should stay with you**, just in case anything changes. And no, you don't need to be woken up every hour. Let yourself rest.

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## Things to Avoid While You're Recovering

Here's what *not* to do while you're healing. These things can slow down your recovery or make symptoms worse:

- No **coffee, energy drinks**, or other stimulants
- Skip any **supplements** you normally take—check with a doctor before restarting them
- Stay away from **alcohol** for at least 48 hours, and until your doctor says it's safe
- **Don't drive** (car, motorcycle, or even a bicycle) until cleared
- **No exercising**—even light training—until your doctor gives the go-ahead
- Keep **screen time short**: answer a few phone messages or emails but avoid binge-watching, gaming, or long sessions at the computer
- Cut down on reading too if it gives you headaches or makes you feel worse

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## Can I Take Something for the Pain?

Only if a doctor says it's okay. In most cases, we recommend sticking to plain old **paracetamol** (like Panado) if you're in pain.

Stay away from:

- **Anti-inflammatory** meds (like Voltaren, Brufen, or Cataflam)
- Anything with **codeine** in it (like Myprodol)

These can interfere with your recovery, so check with your doctor first.

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## Can I Eat After the Game or Practice?

Yes, if you're hungry—go ahead and eat. Just know that feeling a bit nauseous or tired is common, and it might affect your appetite.

Don't force it. Eat when your body feels ready.

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## **How Long Will I Be Monitored?**

You'll need to **follow up with a doctor** after your concussion—this part is really important.

Here's what to expect:

- You can still do basic daily things and maybe some gentle walking, but **no heavy training** until your doctor gives the okay
- **Return-to-play** is different for every player—your doctor will decide when it's safe
- You might do some extra checks (like balance tests, neck exams, or brain function tools like NeuroFlex®) during follow-ups
- Your doctor can also help figure out if **school or work** needs to be adjusted—like less screen time or extra time for tests or tasks

Recovery isn't one-size-fits-all, so go at *your* pace with your medical team guiding the way.

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## **Still Not Feeling 100%? Here's What You Can Do**

It's totally normal for some symptoms—like headaches or difficulty focusing—to stick around for a bit, especially when you're trying to read or use a screen. Concussions can make it hard to concentrate, study, or even just sit through class or get through a work shift.

If that's happening to you, don't tough it out—talk to your doctor **and** your teachers or lecturers. There are support options available to help you get through this time, like:

1. **Short-term changes** to your work, school or study schedule:
  - Starting later or finishing earlier
  - Studying or working in a quieter, low-stimulation space
  - Taking breaks from screens and limiting reading time

## 2. Academic flexibility, like:

- More time to complete tests or assignments
- Deferring assessments if needed

You might need to share a bit of info about your condition with your school or university to set this up—but it's worth it. Your health comes first.

Want to learn more about how we manage sport-related concussions?

Check out these resources:

 [sportsconcussion.co.za](https://sportsconcussion.co.za)

 [neuroflex.io](https://neuroflex.io)

 [yourbrainhealth.net](https://yourbrainhealth.net)

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### Important Concussion Contacts

 Who  Name  Tel No.  After-Hours  Email / Website

 Doctor				
 Hospital				
 School / Club Nurse				
 BokSmart SpineLine (ER24)	—	0800 678 678	0800 678 678	<a href="https://www.boksmart.com">www.boksmart.com</a>
 Sports Concussion SA	—	011 304 7724	082 574 6918	<a href="https://www.sportsconcussion.co.za">www.sportsconcussion.co.za</a>  <a href="mailto:sportsconcussion@mweb.co.za">sportsconcussion@mweb.co.za</a>

### REFERENCES:

- Patricios JS, Schneider KJ, Dvorak J, et al. Consensus Statement On Concussion In Sport: The 6th International Conference on Concussion In Sport—Amsterdam, October 2022. *Br J Sports Med* 2023;57:695–711.

- Echemendia RJ, Burma JS, Bruce JM, et al. Acute Evaluation Of Sport-Related Concussion And Implications For The Sport Concussion Assessment Tool (Scat6) For Adults, Adolescents and Children: A Systematic Review. *Br J Sports Med* 2023;57:722–735.

- World Rugby Player Welfare <https://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org>

- NCAA Concussion fact sheet for students [http://fs.ncaa.org/docs/health\\_safety/confactsheetsa.pdf](http://fs.ncaa.org/docs/health_safety/confactsheetsa.pdf)