

# **BCFSA CONCUSSION PROTOCOL**

(adapted from the Canadian Freestyle Ski Association - September 9, 2015)

## **DEFINITION OF CONCUSSION**

A concussion is an alteration of the normal function of the brain induced by trauma. This trauma may be in the form of a direct blow or rotational forces resulting in a rapid acceleration/deceleration of the brain within the skull. Concussion is often difficult to recognize, as some athletes do not complain of symptoms. Symptoms may include any or all of: headache, dizziness, nausea, fatigue, sensitivity to light or noise, decreased memory, difficulty with concentration, mental sluggishness, anxiety, irritability or poor appetite. Loss of consciousness is not required to have a concussion; in fact most athletes do not lose consciousness.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF CONCUSSION RECOGNITION**

A concussion is important to recognize so the brain can be given adequate time to rest and heal. If an athlete returns to sport too early, symptoms may become prolonged, and the athlete may be put at risk for a second concussion or other significant injury. The often-vague symptom complex can make recognition of the diagnosis difficult at first. We often rely on the athlete to report the injury, which may not happen if the athlete is concussed and not processing information properly. This underlines the importance of the coach, therapist or doctor to help recognize a possible concussion, and give the appropriate advice to the athlete.

## **PRESEASON TESTING**

All athletes should have completed baseline IMPACT (Immediate Post-concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing) and SCAT (Sideline Concussion Assessment Tool) tests prior to the competitive season. These tests provide a valuable baseline for comparison when re-evaluating the athlete with prolonged concussive symptoms. Repeat Impact testing is not necessary after every concussion. The medical staff will decide about the need for repeat testing on a case-by-case basis.

## **INITIAL ASSESSMENT AND DIAGNOSIS**

Any athlete with suspected concussive symptoms should be removed from training or competition by the coach, therapist or doctor for an on-site assessment. Every athlete must be evaluated by a therapist, and if present a physician. If the athlete has symptoms or findings suggestive of concussion, they should be removed from further activity until evaluation by a

physician. An athlete who has sustained a suspected concussion may not return to any training activity prior to clearance by a medical doctor.

## **INITIAL MANAGEMENT**

As per the Prague guidelines, the initial treatment is rest. The athlete should not be left alone for the first few hours post concussion. Alcohol and any strenuous activity should be avoided. Bright lights, video games and television should be limited. Use of medication in the acute setting should be only under the direct supervision of the team physician. Medical evaluation will determine whether any other acute investigations such as CT or MRI are warranted.

## **RETURN TO PLAY**

Following the Prague guidelines, the following is suggested as a model.

Once the athlete is believed to be recovered and free of symptoms:

15 minutes of stationary bicycle on day #1.

60 minutes of more aggressive cardio work such as bike or jogging on day #2.

60 minutes of free skiing without jumps on day #3.

60 minutes of sport specific activity with low DD on day #4.

Full activity carefully monitored by coach and trainer on day #5.

**Clearance to progress from level 3 to level 4 must be provided by one of the BCFSA endorsed physicians.**

Note, progression from one day to the next is only allowed if the athlete remains completely symptom-free up until the following morning. If there is any recurrence of symptoms, the athlete must return to the rest phase until 24 hours free of symptoms. They may then resume the return to play protocol at one level below the level where symptoms occurred (i.e. if symptoms occur at level 4, the athlete returns to level 3 after 24 hours symptom-free).

Dr. Bob Foxford

Rev. Dr. Jeff Purkis 2014