



Concussion management policy and safe return to play

Concussions are rare in cross-country skiing, but they do happen! As well, they can occur during another sport or recreational activity. Since there are many situations in which a concussion can occur, it is important for coaches, parents and athletes to be knowledgeable about the signs and symptoms of concussion and what should be done, if such an incident occurs.

In our sport, skiers are especially vulnerable during training on dry terrain and especially during rollerskiing as it is possible to reach good speeds. Thus, all members of CCNB must adhere to the « CCNB RollerSkiing Policy - May 2015".

The present policy serves to inform our members about concussions in general and to give them some references on this subject. It does not constitute, under any circumstances, a medical opinion.

Some information on concussions:

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a head trauma that can be caused by any blow to the face, head, or neck, or a blow to the body that causes a sudden movement of the head. You do not have to lose consciousness to suffer a concussion. It is a head injury that usually can not be identified with X-rays or CT scans. It is diagnosed by the history of how the injury occurred and the symptoms that the person may feel.

Some common symptoms include:

- A general state of confusion (i.e. does not know the time, place, date, and other details of surroundings; cannot remember things that happened before or after the injury; knocked out)
- Headache
- Dizziness / Sleepiness
- Feeling of being dazed
- Double vision / trouble or loss of sight / sees stars, flashing lights
- Coordination or poor balance
- Nausea and / or vomiting
- Low concentration / Easily distracted / Strange or inappropriate emotions

Cross Country Ski New Brunswick provides this information on concussions as supplementary to any information provided by experts in the field of concussion management. All athletes, coaches, members are encouraged to become familiar with identifying concussions, identifying risks associated with our sport and follow safe play practices.

Concussion Management: If you suspect a concussion, what should you do?

Anyone who may have suffered a concussion should stop all physical activities immediately. Symptoms of head trauma may worsen later in the day or night. This person should not be left alone, and the same day she should consult a health care professional with concussion experience as soon as possible. If you experience worsening of symptoms such as more than two vomiting or seizures following the injury, you should call 911 for emergency assistance.

The signs and symptoms of a concussion often last seven to ten days, but may last longer for some people, especially those younger than 18 years old or those who have had past concussions. The symptoms of a concussion are aggravated by the effort of a physical and intellectual nature. For this reason, it is important to follow the advice of a health professional to ensure a return to school, work and play.

Helmets are very effective at preventing certain head injuries such as skull fractures, but they do not prevent concussions. It is important to put a helmet that fits well on the head for activities such as cycling, skateboarding, hockey, football, skiing and skating to help protect the skull and brain.

For a pocket recognition tools, please click on the following link: <http://nbtrauma.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Pocket-Concussion-Recognition-Tool-English.pdf>

Return to Play Procedures

Following their removal from the activity, any person suspected to have sustained a concussion is to be assessed by a medical doctor to determine the extent of the athlete's injury and to rule out further pathology.

Individuals diagnosed with a concussion should follow their physician's guidance as well as rest until they are symptom-free. Then and only after they are without symptoms for a 24 hours period, they should begin a step-wise symptom-limited program with stages of progression. Those steps include:

Step 1: No Activity, only complete rest and no external stimuli. Once back to normal and cleared by a physician, go to step 2

Step 2: Light aerobic exercise such as walking or stationary cycling.

Step 3: Sport-specific exercise for about 20-30 minutes.

Step 4: Increasing sport-specific exercise as long as symptom free

Step 5: Return to higher intensity training and medium to heavy resistance training

Step 6: Return to full training activity

Each step must take a minimum of one day. If the athlete has any symptoms of a concussion that come back at any step, STOP activity, wait for 24 – 48 hours, and resume activity at the previous step. The protocol must be individualized to the athlete/person and their injury.

Further Concussion Resources:

For more information on concussions, including symptoms, what to expect and how to recover, please see the links below:

<https://www.coach.ca/sensibilisation-aux-commotions-s16361&language=en>

<http://nbtrauma.ca/concussions/>

<http://horizon.parachutecanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Concussion-ReturnToSport.pdf>