



# Position Statement

## Concussion in Sport

**29 January 2020**

There is a growing concern in Australia and internationally about the incidence of sport-related concussion and the potential health ramifications for participants in sport or recreational activities. RDA Australia fully endorses Sport Australia's position statement on *Concussion in Sport* which recommends any athlete with suspected concussion is not allowed to return to the field of play on the same day of injury and should be assessed by a medical practitioner before returning to sport. It is important that coaches and parents understand the signs and symptoms of concussion and the long term impacts on health, wellbeing and learning.

### WHAT IS CONCUSSION

Concussion is an injury where the brain moves rapidly back and forth, can twist or hit the skull. This can be caused by a blow or jolt to the head (e.g. being hit in the head by a horse's head), or by a sudden stop (as in a fall). It should be noted that concussion can occur in a fall from a horse where the rider lands on their feet or bottom but does not necessarily hit their head.

Concussion involves temporary neurological impairment. The symptoms may evolve over the hours or days following the injury. It's important to understand that:

- **All concussion is serious!**
- **Helmets will not stop concussion from occurring (*they are still important for prevention of traumatic head injuries such as lacerations or skull fractures*).**

### MANAGING CONCUSSION

Following a suspected concussion, there should be a period of rest, under supervision of a responsible adult, where the client/participant is monitored for symptoms of concussion. People with concussion should not be allowed to drive and should be advised to avoid alcohol and check their medications with their doctor.

**Any evidence of concussion requires immediate medical attention.**

Coaches, volunteers and teachers/parents/carers need to be alert for evidence after an impact that a client/participant is:

- behaving unusually, or out of character,
- exhibits signs of disorientation,
- showing signs of clumsiness or loss of balance.

In relation to falls, if a coach is confident there are no signs of concussion and that the fall was not heavy or uncontrolled, they still should not mount the rider back on a horse immediately, but allow at least 15 minutes to be sure no symptoms are apparent. It is no longer the right thing "to get straight back on the horse"! Concussion symptoms may take time to develop.

### RDA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

If there is any doubt about whether a client/participant is concussed, they should not be allowed to return to riding until cleared by a medical practitioner. Research indicates that particularly in children, there should not be a return to sport for 14 days following suspected concussion. Written evidence of medical clearance can be requested following a suspected concussion and before the participant returns to RDA activities.

RDA qualified coaches have current first aid training including recognising the signs and symptoms of concussion. Emergency procedures will be followed for calling an ambulance and monitoring/administering first aid until arrival of paramedics. An RDA Incident/Accident Form will be completed to be handed to the teacher/parent/ carer following any incident at RDA that requires close monitoring and supervision, including advice to seek medical attention if symptoms develop. A Fact Sheet regarding Concussion is also recommended to be shared with teachers/parents/carers when a fall has occurred.

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[www.rda.org.au](http://www.rda.org.au)