

Could a concussion be doing your head in?

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749 River Valley Drive
humanperformancecentre.ca

With the recent increase in head injuries throughout the National Hockey League, concussions have pushed their way to top of the list of concerns for athletes and parents.

This month we are looking at what a concussion is and how to best diagnose these injuries.

A concussion is defined as an injury to the brain as a result of some sort of direct trauma to the head, face, neck, or any other body part that transmits a force to the head. A concussion results in a set of clinical symptoms that may or may not result in loss of consciousness.



Scott Andrecheck, BSc Kin, MSC Physiotherapy

If you have any questions or concerns for Scott, please contact him directly at scott.andrecheck@humanperformancecentre.ca.

Typically, the symptoms occur rapidly and are short-lived, however, in a small percentage of cases, the symptoms can last for days, weeks, or even years; and has been termed “**post-concussion syndrome**” When evaluating a concussion it is important to pay attention to the symptoms, such as, an impaired or loss of consciousness, headaches, dizziness, nausea, ringing in the ears, vomiting, altered speech, memory problems, decreased coordination, slowed reaction times, impaired balance, confusion, emotional or mood changes, and personality changes. **If any ONE of these symptoms is present after a head injury a concussion is suspected.**

An appropriate tool to assess concussions is the **Sports Concussion Assessment Tool (SCAT2)** and it is the assessment tool used by FIFA, IIHF, International Rugby Association, and the IOC. This tool evaluates all the signs and symptoms of concussion (cognitive, balance, coordination) and has been used as both a baseline measure (done pre-season prior to any athletic event) and then again immediately once concussive symptoms are suspected; this allows a comparison from the symptoms free base line testing. A physiotherapist is a qualified healthcare provider who can administer the

SCAT2 assessment at baseline and again after a blow to the head. This can help your physician properly diagnose a concussion and lead to proper management. When it comes to treating concussions, physical and cognitive rest is key until symptoms have resolved, this includes no television or video games until these symptoms have improved. Stay tuned next month as we look into return to play timelines and how exercise and your physiotherapist play an important role in the rehabilitation of a head injury.



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