

# USE YOUR SMARTS TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE BOKS!

## What signs to look for and how to manage concussions that occur on the rugby field.

While concussions that occur in rugby are rarely fatal, they have the potential to cause brain damage if not identified and managed correctly. BokSmart's philosophy is that no concussion, if managed properly, should ever lead to a catastrophic outcome! BokSmart provides tried and tested methods of not only suspecting when a player is suffering from a concussion, but also managing that player afterwards, monitoring his recovery and ensuring that he isn't put back on the field until he is 100% recovered.

Should a player exhibit any signs of dizziness, looking unsteady on their feet, falling over, loss of consciousness, confusion, convulsions or irritability following contact on the field, remove them from play immediately.

### **A player does not have to be knocked out to have a concussion!**

Players suffering from a concussion will commonly complain of headaches, dizziness, confusion or feeling slowed down. They also often struggle with blurred vision, feeling nauseous or vomiting, fatigue, a feeling of pressure in the head and are sometimes even sensitive to light or noise.

There are a number of questions that can be asked to players suspected of having a concussion which can be found in the "Medical Protocol" section of the BokSmart website ([www.boksmart.com](http://www.boksmart.com)).

If a player is uncertain about any of the answers to the questions listed in the Concussion Guide on the BokSmart website, he must be taken off the field immediately. Even, if he gets them right, if you are still in any doubt, rather take them off, and suspect a concussion.

Having been permanently taken off the field and assessed by a medical doctor, a player must only be allowed back to rugby after he has undergone the graduated Return To Play protocol and has been given final clearance from a medical doctor to return to ANY sporting activity or exercise.

### **These players must never return to play on the same day!**

Minimum stand down period after injury:  
Players 15 years old or younger: 23 days  
Players 16-19 years old: 19 days  
Players 20 and older: 6 days

The graduated return to play protocol consists of 6 phases, of which the first is the age-appropriate mandated rest phase and the last stage is the full return to rugby.

Each Stage is allocated a specific time period depending on how old the player is. For players 15 years old and younger, each stage progression lasts 48 hours, and for players 16 and older each stage progression lasts 24 hours.

**Stage 1** is complete rest of the brain and body, until no symptoms remain. For players 19 years old and younger this period is a minimum of 2 weeks off, and even longer if any signs or symptoms remain. For players aged 20 and older, this is a minimum of 1 day and the player must be sign and symptom free.

**Stage 2** is light aerobic exercise for 10-15 minutes where the player must be symptom free during the full 24 or 48 hour period, whichever is applicable.

**Stage 3** becomes more sport-specific and pushes the intensity up a bit, to where the player is exposed to running drills, where rugby specific movement patterns are added, but still includes no potential head impact activities yet.

**Stage 4** progresses the player to more complex training drills where passing can be included. The player can also incorporate progressive resistance training into their day. The purpose here is to combine non-contact exercise, coordination and decision-making, which increases the load on the brain.

Before entering **Stage 5**, which represents normal training activities such as full contact practice, it is critical that the player is cleared by a medical doctor to do so. They should also show no signs or symptoms during this Stage and the full 24 or 48 hour period, whichever is applicable, before being given the final go ahead to return to full match play or **Stage 6**.

If a player shows any signs or symptoms during any Stage, they should consult with their treating medical doctor, and move back a stage to where they were previously sign and symptom free, and attempt to progress again after a minimum of 24 or 48 hours rest, whichever is applicable.

BokSmart provides you with all the necessary information at your fingertips to make better informed decisions, when the players need it most. Visit [www.BokSmart.com](http://www.BokSmart.com) or follow us on Twitter: @BokSmart or Facebook: [Facebook.com/BokSmart](https://www.facebook.com/BokSmart). For any potentially serious concussion, head, neck or spine rugby injury contact the toll-free BokSmart SpineLine number, 0800678678, operated by ER24.