

How Can Concussion Be Prevented?

It is important to note that there will always be a certain level of risk associated with participation in contact sports, but that the sporting governing bodies, should do as much as possible to lower this risk through fair play, rule changes, and education programmes. Changing your risk profile may be achieved through (1) minimising the exposure to head trauma during training and matches, (2) ensuring that concussed players are removed from play and that they receive the best medical care available at the time of their injury, and (3) by encouraging persons to adhere to the stipulated return-to-play protocols.

Other forms of intervention for concussion prevention are aimed more at the technical elements of contact sports, such as avoiding unnecessary contact, ie. running into space, and the coaching of safe and effective contact techniques, such as tackling or ball carries.

Why is prevention important?

Concussion is a brain injury which should be identified, treated and managed correctly. Failure to do so can potentially have serious short and long-term consequences. Reducing the incidence or rate of concussion is important for all rugby players' health, wellbeing and ongoing participation in the game.

Can concussions be prevented?

Rugby is a collision sport with many high speed, high impact contact events between the players. However a number of important intervention strategies may help reduce the chance and incidence rate of concussions.

Equally important is a secondary prevention strategy to avoid further concussions in a player who has already suffered a concussive head injury.

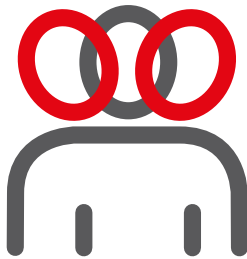
That is why "Recognising and Removing" is so essential for player wellbeing.



Five "E's" of Concussion Prevention

E1. Educate

- The more you know about concussion, the more you can do to prevent concussions
- Understand the impact and significance of concussion
- Learn how to identify a concussed player and what YOU can do
- Identify those situations which may place players at potential risk of concussion and be aware
- Follow best practice principles in managing concussions in your players
- Go online to the World Rugby Player Welfare site for their Concussion education modules at <http://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/concussion>



E2. Enforce

- Play strictly by the laws of the game
- Forbid dangerous tackles and plays
- Ensure that ALL coaches and referees are trained about concussion identification and management
- Enforce the mandated graduated return-to-play protocol and stand-down periods on all players who have suspected or confirmed concussions.

E3. Enhance

- Improve and work only on safe and effective tackling techniques
- The tackle phase contributes to around 61% of all concussions
- The tackler is almost four times more susceptible to concussion than the ball carrier, and alone contributes to about 49% of all concussions, so perfecting tackle technique is crucial for preventing concussions
- Tackle technique is often not good in younger developing rugby players

making them more susceptible to injury

- Concussion risk increases as game time progresses. This is due to fatigue, reduced tackle proficiency and concentration.
- Enhance your fitness levels and ensure you are well-conditioned
- Specifically strengthen your neck, this should be done throughout the year
- Practice and coach safe rucking techniques, practices and principles. These players are potentially more vulnerable and exposed to concussions than the players entering the ruck.

E4. Equip

- Although mouth guards do not always reduce the incidence of concussion, players should use them to prevent injuries to teeth, gums and the tongue
- The use of rugby headgear may help reduce lacerations and protect your ears, but do not prevent concussions.



E5. Evaluate

- Ensure that your school or club has a concussion policy and action plan in place for suspecting, identifying, treating and managing concussions
- Send all players with a suspected concussion for medical evaluation before allowing them to participate again
- Ensure that all suspected and diagnosed concussions undergo the complete graduated return to play protocol before returning to rugby.

Concussions occur in many sporting and non-sporting situations. Preventing all concussions is impossible. However, adequate conditioning, all-year round neck strengthening, good tackle and ruck techniques, abiding by the laws of the game, appropriate use of equipment and a concussion policy that players, coaches, referees and supporters understand, will significantly help reduce the risks.

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