

FACT SHEET

RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED

Concussion in sport - Coaches

The *Concussion in Sport Australia* position statement 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 SHOULD COACHES DO?

If in Doubt – Sit Them Out!

RDA qualified coaches have current first aid training including recognising the signs and symptoms of concussion. However, new research shows that a concussion can occur at any time that the body sustains a hard knock to the head (like being hit in the head by a horse's head) or by a sudden stop (as in a fall). A 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.

This Fact Sheet provides advice about suspected concussion. Following a fall or injury to the head, coaches should sit the participant out of activities under the supervision of a responsible adult and monitor for signs and symptoms of concussion for at least 15-20 minutes.

Be alert for evidence that a rider/participant is:

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

And seek immediate medical attention if symptoms of a concussion are present. Remember that some RDA participants may be unable to communicate the location of pain or describe how they are feeling. Careful observation following an incident is important. Even capable riders may be unaware of injury following a fall due to the effects of adrenaline. A return to riding may not be recommended for a period of 24 hours but the participant may enjoy re-establishing the bond with their horse by patting, grooming or leading their horse (if suitable). Provide the participant/teacher/parent/carer with an Incident Report, information about concussion and instructions to seek immediate medical attention if symptoms of concussion or other injury present.

Adults participants with a suspected concussion (this includes coaches and volunteers involved in a fall from a horse) should not be allowed to drive and should be advised to avoid alcohol, aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, sleeping tablets and sedating pain medication. If signs and symptoms of concussion are present there should not be a return to RDA activities for 14 days or until written evidence of a medical clearance is provided.

- **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).**

RDA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REQUIRE:

This Fact Sheet is supported by RDA policies and procedures including the RDA Concussion Position Statement and the Incident and Accident Reporting policies. RDA qualified coaches are required to have current first aid training including recognising the signs and symptoms of concussion. Fact Sheets regarding Concussion (for coaches and participants) are resources to support the policy and to support coaches in their decision making.

If there is any doubt – do not mount the rider on a horse. It is no longer the right thing “to get back on the horse”!

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RECOGNISING THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION

Critical symptoms/ signs	Obvious Symptoms/ Sign	Subtle Symptoms/ signs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neck pain • Increasing confusion, agitation or irritability • Repeated vomiting • Seizure or convulsion • Weakness or tingling/ burning in the arms or legs • Deteriorating conscious state • Severe or increasing headache • Unusual behavioural change • Double vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of consciousness • No protective action in fall to ground observed or on video • Seizure or jerky movements after a knock • Confusion, disorientation • Memory impairment • Unsteady on feet or balance problems • Athlete reports significant, new or progressive concussion symptoms • Dazed or looking blank/ vacant • Changed behaviour – may be more irritable, agitated, anxious or emotional than normal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache • ‘Pressure in the head’ • Neck pain • Nausea or vomiting • Dizziness • Blurred vision • Balance problems • Sensitivity to light • Sensitivity to noise • Feeling slowed down • Feeling like ‘in a fog’ • ‘Don’t feel right’ • Difficulty concentrating • Difficulty remembering • Fatigue or low energy • Confusion • Drowsiness • More emotional • Irritability sadness nervous or anxious • Trouble falling asleep (if applicable)
<p>If a participant displays these symptoms/ signs they may have a more serious injury. They should be immediately taken to the nearest emergency department.</p>		