

## TBMFA Protocol for Return to Play after a Head Injury

Background: With the start of the 2015 playing season, The Thunder Bay Minor Football Association (TBMFA) has implemented a new playing rule regarding potential head injuries. The rule requires “any player who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviours consistent with a concussion (such as loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the game and shall not return to play until cleared by an appropriate health care professional.” In applying that rule, it has been determined that only certified physicians licensed to practice medicine in all its branches can clear an athlete to return to play the day of a contest in which the athlete has been removed from the contest for a possible head injury.

Policy: In cases when an athlete is not cleared to return to play the same day as he/she is removed from a contest following a possible head injury (i.e., concussion), the athlete shall not return to play or practice until the athlete is evaluated by and receives written clearance from a licensed health care provider to return to play.

For the purposes of this policy, licensed health care providers consist of physicians licensed to practice medicine in all its branches.

Rehabilitation Stage	Functional Exercise at each stage of rehabilitation	Success Goal of Each Stage
1. No activity	Complete physical and cognitive rest	Recovery (Symptom free at rest)
2. Light aerobic exercise	Walking, swimming or stationary cycling keeping intensity <70% Maximum Predicted Heart Rate. No resistance training	Increase heart rate without symptoms
3. Sport-specific exercise	Running keeping intensity <70% Maximum Predicted Heart Rate.	No head impact activities. Add movement
4. Non-contact training drills	Progression to more complex training drills (e.g. passing drills). May start progressive resistance training.	Increase exercise, coordination, cognitive load without symptoms.
5. Full contact practice	Following medical clearance, participate in normal training activities.	Restore confidence, assessment of functional skills by coaching staff
6. Return to play	Normal game play	

Return to Play: It is determined that a player is able to return to play when they are symptom free at rest and at exertion, and have returned to a baseline state of the tests they were administered prior to sustaining the injury. An athlete will not return to participation the same day as a concussion event. When returning athlete to play, they will follow the six step symptom-limited program outlined above. Steps 2 (Light aerobic exercise) and step 3 (Sport-specific exercise) of the symptom-limited program may best be performed/evaluated by a trained medical professional (i.e. Physical Therapist). Once the athlete has received clearance from a licensed health care provider, they may return to play. **A parent’s consent is not a sufficient means for an athlete to return to participation.** Athletes who have not been cleared to participate cannot be in a uniform for any games.