



Newmarket Minor Hockey Association

*Return To Play Protocol*

Note: The following Return to Play Guidelines are taken from the Hockey Trainers Certification Program (HTCP) as published by the Hockey Development Centre Ontario (HDCO). May 23, 2012

**Co-ordinating Return to Play** (bodily injuries)

- Injuries will occur during the course of a season in both House League and Rep divisions of the game. Parents, coaches and players will often look to the hockey trainer for advice and direction regarding return to play procedures.

- Caution should be exercised when such a decision needs to be made. Your primary goal and duty is **not** to make a decision whether a player can return to play but rather to ensure safety of the player is the top priority at all times.

- Communication is vital with the player, parents and coaches when a decision needs to be made about removing a player from action or returning to play. The hockey trainers duty is to observe the injured player, remove them from competition, communicate with the coaches and parents or guardians and direct the player to a proper medical authority.

- There may be pressure on you to allow the player to return to play. **It is your responsibility to ensure the return to play policy is followed, before any player returns to play.** Safety is the top priority and protecting the player from further injury is essential. Your role as a hockey trainer is not to try and get the player back into competition as soon as possible, but rather to make sure the players safety is the top priority at all times, and refer them to the proper medical authority.

- Players who are removed from games or practices due to injury or serious illness, and do not return to that game or practice, must obtain a note from a physician before they are allowed to return to play. If you are ever in doubt as to the seriousness of a players injury or illness, exercise common sense and direct

**Co-ordinating Return to Play** (bodily injuries).....cont'd

the parents to seek medical attention for the player and request a physician's note be obtained before permitting to play or practice. Clearly communicate the necessity of medical permission from a physician to the player's parents or guardians and the coaching staff.

- After an extended layoff, (more than 15 consecutive days) players **must** practice before they play. The practice situation is a controlled setting which allows players to gradually adapt and feel comfortable without risking further injury. The practice also permits a player to regain some conditioning and cardiovascular endurance before returning to play. Remember, players are much more at risk to re-injure themselves in the injured area or another area because of a lack of conditioning.

- A player with proper medical permission, should not return to play unless they can demonstrate appropriate skills in a practice situation. Remember, you want full function and return to previous fitness and skill level.

### **Co-ordinating Return to Play** (head injuries, concussion)

-Return to play following a concussion follows the stepwise process. **This process only begins after a physician has given the player clearance to return to activity. If any signs/symptoms return during this process then the player must be re-evaluated by a physician.**

#### Return to Play Steps

Step 1. No activity, only complete rest. Proceed to step 2 only when symptoms are gone. This includes avoiding both mental and physical stress. (No iPad, TV, reading or significant studying should be done during "complete rest" period)

Step 2. Light aerobic exercise, such as walking or stationary cycling. Monitor for symptoms or signs. No resistance training or weight lifting.

Step 3. Sport specific activities and training (e.g. skating) Monitor for symptoms or signs.

Step 4. Drills without body contact. May add light resistance training and progress to heavier weights.

The time needed to progress from non-contact to contact exercise will vary with the severity of the concussion and the player. If the player has medical clearance and is symptom free, go to step 5.

Step 5. Drills with body contact. Monitor for symptoms or signs.

Step 6. Game play.

## **Co-ordinating Return to Play** (head injuries, concussion).....cont'd

**(In all cases of concussion, no player will be allowed to return to game play for a period of one week.)**

Players should proceed through the return to play steps as long as they have a physicians okay and are not experiencing symptoms or signs. Each step should be a minimum of one day. Some steps may be accomplished at home away from the rink. If symptoms or signs return. He player must be re-evaluated by a physician and begin the steps process over.

Refer to the ThinkFirst - SportSmart Concussion Education and Awareness Program card (yellow and black printed card found in your HTCP manual) for addition information.