

Safety Alert - Head Injuries

Last year, 36 reported incidents resulted in head injuries, a surprisingly high number for a non-contact sport. Some of these incidents involved blows to the head, mostly received in collisions and falls, and resulted in serious injuries. So what should you do if someone sustains a head injury?

What symptoms should you look for?

- loss of consciousness (even for a few seconds)
- amnesia (memory loss)
- persistent headaches since the injury
- changes in behaviour
- confusion
- drowsiness
- a large bruise or wound to the head or face
- vision problems
- reading or writing problems
- balance problems or difficulty walking
- loss of power in part of the body
- clear fluid leaking from the nose or ears

Symptoms may not occur for several hours, or possibly days, so it is important to remain alert for signs and symptoms that could suggest a serious injury has been sustained.

What you should do?

- Take the casualty to nearest Accident and Emergency Department so that a Doctor can assess them.
- Do not let the casualty exercise, drive or manipulate heavy machinery. Call an ambulance if necessary.
- **DO NOT** let the casualty take any Drugs or Alcohol (other than prescribed medications) until they have been assessed by a Paramedic or Doctor

Phone 999 or 112 for an ambulance if the casualty:

- remains unconscious after the initial injury
- is having difficulty staying awake, speaking or understanding what people are saying
- is having a seizure or fit
- has been vomiting since the injury
- is bleeding from one or both ears

Afterwards

Explain to a friend or carer that for the next 24 hours, there is a need to keep an eye on the casualty and stay within easy reach of a telephone. If any symptoms appear or their condition deteriorates seek medical advice immediately.

Returning to sport

Exercising when suffering from concussion can make the condition worse. All sport should be avoided for 7 – 10 days or longer if the concussion is severe. Head injuries sustained outside rowing should be reported to the coach. If in any doubt seek healthcare professional advice and follow it.

Scalp wounds

Sometimes head injuries are caused by walking into riggers. In most cases these result in a scalp wound which is not serious but they normally bleed profusely and you may need medical treatment to stop the bleeding.

More information

See <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Concussion/Pages/Introduction.aspx> and links.

If in any doubt about a head injury, do not exercise, seek medical advice and follow it.

May 2015