

21st March 2022



Official Information Act Request for – Process in regards to sports related Concussion

I write in response to your Official Information Act request received by us 23rd February 2022, you requested the following information:

- 1. What process would a patient go through when presenting at a Hospital accident and emergency with a suspected sports-related concussion?**
- 2. Do hospital emergency departments give clearance for return-to-sport on the day of a suspected concussion incident?**
- 3. Is there a process followed to give a clearance for a sports related concussion on the day of the incident?**

Counties Manukau Health Response:

For context Counties Manukau Health (CM Health) employs over 8,500 staff and provides health and support services to people living in the Counties Manukau region (approx. 601,490 people). We see over 118,000 people in our Emergency Department each year, and over 2,000 visitors come through Middlemore Hospital daily.

Our services are delivered via hospital, outpatient, ambulatory and community-based models of care. We provide regional and supra-regional specialist services i.e. for orthopaedics, plastics, burns and spinal services. There are also several specialist services provided including tertiary surgical services, medical services, mental health and addiction services.

- 1. What process would a patient go through when presenting at a Hospital accident and emergency with a suspected sports-related concussion?**
A routine Clinical Assessment looking for major injury takes place, this includes looking for red flags that may require a head CT or period of observation. No formal return to sport assessment is made at the time as it is a graduated process requiring time. On discharge, concussion advice is provided and recommendation that patients follow up with their GP prior to their return to sport.
- 2. Do hospital emergency departments give clearance for return-to-sport on the day of a suspected concussion incident?**
- 3. Is there a process followed to give a clearance for a sports related concussion on the day of the incident?**

In response to both questions two and three.

No. The information we provide to the patient on discharge advises against this. Our advice outlines potential post-concussive symptoms which can be expected, recommendation to see the family doctor, concussion specialist or have a neurology review the symptoms have not started to resolve within 7 days.

Advice for athletes returning to sport including a step based symptom-limited approach with stages of progression and advise of clearance by a medical doctor prior to returning to active play.

Attachment 1 contains the Post-Concussion and Returning to Sport Information we provide to patients.

I trust this information answers your request. You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or Freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response or an edited version of this may be published on the Counties Manukau Health website. If you consider there are good reasons why this response should not be made publicly available, we will be happy to consider this.

Yours sincerely



Dr Peter Watson
Acting Chief Executive Officer
Counties Manukau Health

Post-Concussion and Returning to Sport Advice

You or your child has sustained a head injury today. Over the next days to weeks and very occasionally months, there are many Post-Concussive symptoms which can be expected which include any or all of the following:

COMMON SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION

Headache	Confusion	Dizziness
Nausea	Vomiting	Irritability
Depression	Nervousness	Visual Disturbances
Impaired Concentration	Impaired Memory	Feeling Drowsy
Balance Problems	Trouble Sleeping	Sensitivity to light/noise
Feeling 'slowed down'	Feeling 'like in a fog'	

If these symptoms have not started to resolve within 7 days, please see your family doctor as you or your child may require concussion specialist or neurology review.

With respect to returning to sport, there is a moderate danger for a second concussion which has the potential to cause worsening symptoms or even death in extremely rare circumstances. Multiple concussions have been linked to long term brain dysfunction especially in children and should be avoided if at all possible.

The following is the advice that we would suggest is followed in returning to sport to minimize any danger to you or your child. This is a stepwise approach which is based on symptoms and not on time from impact.

This means that each person will recover at their own pace and time limits cannot be guaranteed.

RETURN TO PLAY

Athletes should NOT be returned to play the same day of injury.

When returning athletes to play, they should follow a stepwise symptom-limited program, with stages of progression.

RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL

- No activity, complete physical and mental rest for a minimum of 7 days.** After this week and/or once symptom free for 48 hours, proceed to level 2.
- Light aerobic exercise such as walking, swimming or stationary cycling. No resistance training. **NO CONTACT.**
- Sport specific training (e.g. running drills, ball handling skills). **NO CONTACT**
- NON-contact** training drills. May restart resistance training.
- Full contact **TRAINING** after medical clearance
- Game play

There should be approximately 24 HOURS (or longer) SYMPTOM FREE at each stage and the athlete should return to stage 1 for at least 24 hours if symptoms recur at any stage.

Resistance training should only be added in the later stages (4-6)

You or your child should be cleared by a medical doctor prior to returning to active play.