Safety Alert - Head Injuries

The number of reported incidents resulting in head injuries is surprisingly high for a non-contact sport. Some of these incidents involve blows to the head, mostly received in collisions and falls, and result 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

The CRTS tool can help you identify whether the casualty is suffering from concussion (see Safety Alert – Concussion in the Safety Alert Archive or https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/early/2017/04/26/bjsports-2017-097508CRTS). 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 to be assessed by a Doctor.
- 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**


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

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