

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CONCUSSION

The following guidance is intended to help you to recognise the signs and symptoms of a concussion and know what to do next.

**If you believe a person has a concussion, they must immediately cease riding or any other horse-related activities – if in doubt, sit them out.**

If you suspect a concussion, always follow the four Rs...

- **Recognise** the signs and symptoms
- **Remove** the injured person from all horse-related activities
- **Recover** until all symptoms have been resolved
- **Return** to ridden activity through a gradual, stepwise process

### RECOGNISE

Immediately following a direct or indirect blow to the head, any of the following could suggest a possible concussion:

- Lying motionless
- Delay in getting up
- Facial injuries
- Blank or vacant expression
- Disorientation or confusion
- Slow, laboured or wobbly movements
- Finding it difficult to balance

The following may also start to appear over time...

- Reduced reaction time
- Sensory sensitivity
- Drowsiness or fatigue
- Amnesia or memory problems
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling sluggish or slow
- Dizziness
- Confusion
- Heightened emotions
- Changes to mood, personality or behaviour
- Slurred speech
- Ringing in the ears
- Lack of responsiveness

The signs and symptoms above are a broad guideline and each person's presentation may differ to some degree. Remember that signs/symptoms may take hours or days to appear.

### REMOVE

If the person is **unconscious**, seek immediate help from a licenced medical professional or dial 999. This also applies **if the person is suffering from...**

- Neck pain
- A severe or worsening headache
- Double vision
- Weakness or a tingling sensation in their limbs
- Vomiting
- A loss or deterioration of consciousness
- Seizures or convulsions
- Restless, combative or agitated behaviour

**Due to risk of spinal cord injuries, don't move the person or remove their riding hat and other protective equipment, unless you're trained to do so. The only exception is if they're having difficulty breathing.**

If the person is **conscious**...

1. Prevent them from continuing any horse-related activities. They must not leave by themselves, or get behind the wheel of a vehicle.
2. Contact their parent/guardian or emergency contact to notify them of the incident, then remain with them until that person arrives.
3. Monitor and document any physical, cognitive or behavioural changes that they might exhibit.
4. Instruct the parent/guardian or emergency contact that the person needs to be seen by a medical practitioner.

### RECOVER

The initial days after sustaining a concussion are critical to recovery. Your body needs complete rest, which means avoiding...

- **Physical activities** such as riding, running and cycling
- **Mental activities** such as reading or watching TV

After 48–72hrs of rest and reduced screen time, gentle physical activity has been shown to aid recovery. Gradually return to normal activity levels.

### RETURN

Only return to riding after at least 21 days and at least 14 days after all symptoms have subsided. A graduated return consists of a stepwise progression in training, ensuring that symptoms don't worsen as you increase your levels of physical and cognitive activity. Check out the British Equestrian concussion guidance document for more information.

## CONCUSSION MYTHBUSTERS



**MYTH:** You can only get concussion if you hit your head.

**FACT:** Concussion happens when a blow to any part of your body causes rapid movement of the head and brain.



**MYTH:** Wearing a riding hat will prevent concussion.

**FACT:** While a riding hat will reduce the risk of serious injury, it won't prevent you from getting a concussion.



**MYTH:** You'll only get concussion if you fall unconscious.

**FACT:** A loss of consciousness occurs in only around 10% of concussion cases, so it isn't a reliable indicator.



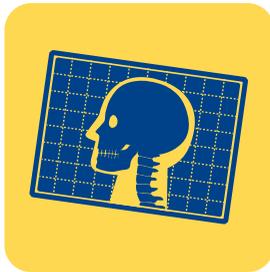
**MYTH:** Concussion symptoms will show straight away.

**FACT:** Some signs and symptoms of concussion can take hours or sometimes even days to become evident.



**MYTH:** Concussion is the same for everyone.

**FACT:** Women are twice as likely to suffer from concussion as men, and children take longer to recover.



**MYTH:** There are tests to diagnose a concussion.

**FACT:** A concussion diagnosis can only be made based on the nature of the injury and the symptoms shown.

## ASK THE QUESTIONS

Memory assessment is one of the key stages of diagnosing a concussion. Ask the injured person some simple questions to test their immediate memory, for example...

1. Which horse are you riding today?
2. Which venue are you riding at?
3. How did you get here today?
4. Where have you travelled from?
5. What's your competitor number?

Failure to correctly answer any of these questions (modified to fit your situation) may indicate a concussion.

*This test should only be used for people older than 12 years.*

## WITH A SUSPECTED CONCUSSION, YOU SHOULDN'T...

- be left alone in the first 24 hours
- consume alcohol in the first 24 hours – continue to avoid alcohol until you're free of all concussion symptoms
- drive a motor vehicle – don't return to driving until provided with medical or healthcare professional clearance, or until you're completely free of all concussion symptoms.

**The information in this fold-out is intended as a guide. Concussion is very serious and can present in many different ways. If you are in any doubt, speak to a licenced medical professional or call 999.**