

14.0 REMOVING PLAYERS FROM ACTION / CO-ORDINATING RETURN TO PLAY

Injuries will occur during the course of a season and especially in divisions where body contact is part of the game. Parents, coaches and players will often look to the Hockey Trainer for advice and direction regarding removal from, and return to play.

- Communication with the player, parents, and coaches is vital when a decision needs to be made about removing a player from action or returning to play.
- The Hockey Trainer's duty is to observe the injured player. If the player is unable to participate at their **usual skill level** due to injury or illness such as high fever or influenza, or they complain of pain and weakness during the activity, then remove them from play. Direct the player to a proper medical authority if necessary.
- 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 the safety of the player is the top priority at all times.
- It is recommended that players who are removed from games or practices due to injury or serious illness such as mononucleosis, and do not return to that game or practice, should obtain a note from a physician before they are allowed to return to play. A Hockey Canada Injury Report form and the HTCP Injury Data Collection Program report form should be completed and the injury recorded on the team injury log so that an accurate injury/recovery history is maintained.
- If you are ever in doubt as to the seriousness of a player's injury or illness, exercise common sense and direct the parents to seek medical attention for the player and **request that a physician's note be obtained before permitting the player 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. Once medical permission is requested, you should work with coaches and parents to ensure the player does not return without it.
- After an extended layoff players should practice before they play. The practice situation is a controlled setting which allows players to gradually adapt, feel comfortable, and regain confidence without risking further injury. The practice situation also permits a player to regain 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.
- Players returning from injuries should never be permitted on the ice unless wearing all protective equipment.
- Players returning to practice from an injury should wear a different color jersey than the rest of the team to identify them as returning from an injury until full conditioning has returned.
- The step wise return to play guidelines for concussion management can be a beneficial process for guiding any injured athlete back into competition.
- A player should not return to play unless they can demonstrate appropriate skills in a practice situation. Remember, you want full function and return to pre injury fitness and skill level.
- There may be pressure on you to allow the player to return to play. This is not your decision. 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 to ensure that the player is both ready and safe to return to play. If there are doubts, a physician's advice should be sought.
- When working with older players who are driving, be aware that certain injuries or circumstances may impair their ability to drive or the decision making process. Ensure that an injured player does not drive home alone.