CONCUSSION POLICY FOR IRISH SAILING

What is concussion?
Concussion is a brain injury and can be caused by a direct or indirect blow to the sailor's head or body. Concussion typically results in an immediate onset of short-lived signs and symptoms. Most concussions occur without a loss of consciousness. However, in some cases, the signs and symptoms of concussion may evolve over a number of minutes or hours.

- **Concussion must be taken very seriously.**
- **Any sailor with a suspected concussion MUST be removed immediately from the session.**
- **The sailor should be medically assessed.**
- **They MUST not be left alone.**

What causes concussion?
Concussions can be caused by a direct blow to the head or body that can occur when the sailor is hit by the boom or in the case of a high-performance sailing when the body or head collide with any part of the boat.

Immediately following a suspected concussion the brain is susceptible to further significant damage in the event of another impact, therefore the sailor **MUST** be immediately removed from the water.

What are the visible signs of suspected concussion? Presence of any one or more of the following signs & symptoms may suggest a concussion:

- **Confusion**
- **Amnesia/short term memory loss concerning what just happened**
- **Blurred vision**
- **Dazed or blank look**
- **Dizziness**
- **Clutching head**
- **Pressure in head**
- **Headache**
- **Emotional/Sadness**
- **Irritability**
- **Suspected or confirmed loss of consciousness**

- **Loss of responsiveness**
- **Poor balance in the boat/ falling over**
- **Nausea/vomiting**
- **Tiredness/low energy**

- **Drowsiness**
- **Stating they "Don't feel right"**
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Questions to ask

1. **"What venue are we at today?" or "Where are we now?"**
2. **"Approximately what time of day is it?"**
3. **"How did you get to here today?"**
4. **"What was your last competition?"**
5. **"What were you doing this time last week?"**

RECOGNISE AND REMOVE

What must happen the sailor after they have a suspected concussion?

- **The sailor must be IMMEDIATELY REMOVED from the activity and must not return.**
- **The sailor must not be left alone.**
- **The sailor must always be in the care of a responsible adult who is informed of the sailor's suspected concussion.**
- **The sailor must not drive a vehicle.**
- **The sailor should be medically assessed as soon as possible.**

Considerations when running sessions. 'Adult On Call'.

In order to implement correct procedure when running coaching sessions the coach must have a system in place to ensure the safety of a sailor with suspected concussion.

- **The coach must have the contact number of an assigned Adult who is 'On call' and nearby.**
- **This Adult should have the medical consent forms of all sailors involved in the session.**
- **When a sailor has suspected concussion the coach phones/radios the on call adult and arranges to meet them at a designated rendezvous point on shore.**
- **The adult on call should make arrangements for the sailor to receive further medical attention.**
- **Always remembering to never leave the sailor alone.**
- **The sailor must not return to the session, and specifically must not return to sailing on the same day of a suspected concussion.**

In all cases of suspected concussion it is recommended that the sailor is referred to a medical or healthcare professional for diagnosis and advice, even if the symptoms resolve.

ONGOING MANAGEMENT OF A CONCUSSION OR SUSPECTED CONCUSSION

REST THE BODY, REST THE BRAIN

Rest is the cornerstone of concussion treatment. This involves

1. **resting the body, 'physical rest'**
2. **Resting the brain, 'cognitive rest'**
   Avoidance of:

- **Physical activities such as running, cycling, swimming, some work activities etc.**
- **Cognitive activities, such as school work, homework, reading, television, video games etc.**
- **Students with a diagnosis of concussion may need allowance for impaired cognition during recovery, such as additional time for classwork, homework and exams**

Anyone with a concussion or suspected concussion should not:

- **be left alone in the first 24 hours**
- **consume alcohol in the first 24 hours, and thereafter should avoid alcohol until free of all concussion symptoms**
- **drive a motor vehicle and should not return to driving until provided with medical or healthcare professional clearance or, if no medical or healthcare professional advice is available, should not drive until free of all concussion symptoms**

Most concussions resolve within 7-10 days, but it is advised that anybody who has had a suspected concussion is reviewed and assessed prior to returning to sailing, by a medical professional who has experience in dealing with concussion.