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EQUESTRIAN CANADA CONCUSSION PROTOCOLS FAQs

Return-to-Play Protocol

About EC's Accidents & Return-to-Play Rule

- EC has become one of the first national governing bodies for sport to release official, sport-specific guidelines on return-to-play protocols for athlete concussions.
- EC's concussion-related *Accidents & Return-to-Play* Rule came into effect January 1, 2017 for all EC sanctioned competitions in Canada.
- The full *Accidents & Return-to-Play* Rule can be found in the [2017 Rules of Equestrian Canada, Section A, General Regulations, Article 101](#)



Return-to-Play Protocol FAQs



What is a concussion?

- [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) describes a concussion as follows:

“A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth.

This sudden movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging brain cells.”

Return-to-Play Protocol FAQs

Does my helmet protect me from concussions?

- **No**, helmets do not prevent concussions.
- Helmets are a vital piece of safety equipment, and protect you from many types of head injuries, but they **do not** prevent the brain from moving within the skull during a fall or impact, and therefore **do not** prevent concussions.



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Why did EC implement an Accidents & Return-to-Play Protocol?

- For the safety and welfare of our equestrian athletes in Canada.
- To allow for the tracking of information about concussion incidences and length of recovery for equestrian athletes post-concussive events in order to continuously monitor and reassess national concussion recommendations for equestrian sport.



“When concussion occurs, it is of the utmost importance that they be recognized and that we limit athletes’ exposure to another potential concussion soon after the first.”

-Dr. Rob Stevenson

Canadian Olympian in Eventing, FEI Safety Officer for Canada

Return-to-Play Protocol FAQs

Who developed EC's concussion rules/protocols?

- EC Head of Sport Science, Jessica Dilllott led the development of EC's Return-to-Play Protocol.
- Additional members of the working group included Dr. Rob Stevenson, Rachel Huebert, Jan Stephens, Jane Tidball, Chris Pack, Doug Orr, Anne Welch and Fran McAvity



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How will concussions be tracked by EC?

- EC will manage a medical suspension list.
- When an Accident & Injury report form is submitted to EC indicating a medical suspension, the athlete will be placed on a medical suspension list within the EC database.
- When a Return-to-Play form is processed for the same athlete once recovered, the athlete will be removed from the medical suspension list



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Who is responsible for collecting concussion data?

- EC Stewards/Technical Delegates are responsible for ensuring Accident & Injury report forms for all incidents at EC sanctioned competitions are completed in full and submitted to EC.
- EC will **not** collect specific medical records of athletes, but will track the incidence of concussions at EC sanctioned competitions in Canada.
- The purpose of the tracking is to gather data for a concussion-related educational program in order to reduce the risk of Second Impact Syndrome and assist athletes in safely returning to the sport through Return-to-Play guidelines.

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What happens if I have a fall/accident at an EC sanctioned competition and a concussion can reasonably be suspected?

- In the event of a fall/accident where a concussion can reasonably be suspected, the competitor must receive assessment from qualified onsite medical personnel before continuing.
- As part of the assessment, the qualified onsite medical personnel must fill out the EC Accident & Injury report form and use the form to indicate either a medical clearance for the athlete to continue, or a medical suspension due to evidence or reasonable suspicion of a head injury/concussion.
- If the athlete is placed under medical suspension, effective immediately, the athlete will not be permitted to compete at EC sanctioned competitions until they have been assessed and cleared by a licenced physician via the EC Return-to-Play form.

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How do I return to competition after being placed on medical suspension?

- Once placed on the medical suspension list, the athlete must be assessed and cleared by a licenced physician via the EC Return-to-Play form before competing at an EC sanctioned competition.
- Once the EC Return-to-Play form, completed in full by a licenced physician, has been submitted to EC, the athlete will be removed from the medical suspension list and can return to competition.
- The timeframe required for clearance is at the discretion of your licenced physician. Recovery time is very individual and therefore no time guidelines are associated with EC's Return-to-Play protocol.
- The medical suspension list will not be made public, and will only be available to EC staff and competition organizers via a secure login.

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Under the EC Return-to-Play protocol, what is the minimum standard for qualified medical personnel?

- As part of EC's Accident & Return to Play Rule, and as a commitment to athlete welfare and safety, the minimum level of certification for **onsite** competition medical personnel will be raised to First Responder in **2018**.



“Though we acknowledge that equestrian sports have inherent risk in participation, we recognize that there is no need to increase risk unnecessarily. Through these concussion protocols, EC has established a thorough framework for the education, recognition and management of concussions.”

- Dr. Rob Stevenson

Canadian Olympian in Eventing, FEI Safety Officer for Canada



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