

1. THE GOLDEN RULE: WHEN IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT

Because pickup soccer relies entirely on self-regulation and peer responsibility, players must look out for one another. If a player sustains any significant impact to the head, face, neck, or body, they must be immediately removed from play for a sideline peer evaluation. Never allow an injured player to self-certify their fitness to continue.

2. ON-FIELD SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Visible Signs (What You See)

- **Dazed Look:** Stunned, blank, or vacant expression immediately following contact.
- **Unsteady Movement:** Stumbling, balance issues, or slow to stand up.
- **Confusion:** Disorientation regarding the score, sides, or game context.
- **Delayed Response:** Slurred speech or noticeable pauses when answering questions.

Reported Symptoms (What the Player Feels)

- **Head Distress:** Headaches or a persistent feeling of physical pressure.
- **Physical Instability:** Nausea, dizziness, or lightheadedness.
- **Visual Disturbances:** Blurred vision, double vision, or floating spots.
- **Sensory Sensitivity:** Intolerance to bright sunlight, field lights, or shouting.

3. IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN

STEP 1 Immediate Removal

Halt play instantly and guide the player off the pitch. Do not allow them to finish the match, play out the half, or "try it out" for a few minutes.

STEP 2 Peer Assessment

Assign a teammate to sit with the player. Conduct a baseline orientation check using localized memory prompts (e.g., the Maddocks Questions) to verify short-term cognitive function.

STEP 3 Monitor for Red Flags

Continuously assess the individual on the bench. If they display worsening headaches, repeated vomiting, slurred speech, worsening confusion, or seizures, **call 911 immediately**.

STEP 4 Safe Transportation Home

Never allow a player with a suspected concussion to drive themselves home. Coordinate a safe ride through a family member, teammate, or ride-share service.

4. RETURN-TO-PLAY GUIDELINES

- **Same-Day Ban:** Any player pulled from a session due to a suspected concussion is strictly prohibited from stepping back on the pitch for the remainder of that calendar day.
- **Symptom-Free Window:** The player must be completely free of physical and cognitive symptoms at rest for a minimum of 24 to 48 hours before participating in any future pickup games.
- **Medical Clearance:** The league strongly recommends that players receive a formal, professional medical evaluation and clearance from a licensed healthcare provider before returning to active play.