

# A PLAYER'S BRAIN IS IN YOUR HANDS

## The 6 R's of concussion:

### Recognise:

You need to be able to recognise the signs and symptoms of a potential concussion in your players. Learn them and know them!

### Remove:

When you recognise any signs and symptoms, and suspect a concussion, remove the player immediately.

### Refer:

Once you have permanently removed the player from the field, refer them to a medical doctor who understands concussions for a thorough clinical assessment.

### Rest:

Rest the player completely until they are totally sign and symptom free, and off any medication that might modify the symptoms of concussion. Use the minimum stand-down periods for each age-group category, before entering the graduated return to play process.

### Recover:

Full recovery of signs and symptoms is mandated before entering into the age-appropriate graduated return to play protocol.

### Return:

To return to play safely following a concussion or suspected concussion, the players must be completely sign and symptom-free, be medically cleared by a doctor to do so, and then must also complete the age appropriate return to play protocol. For the purpose of concussion, full contact practice equals return to play.

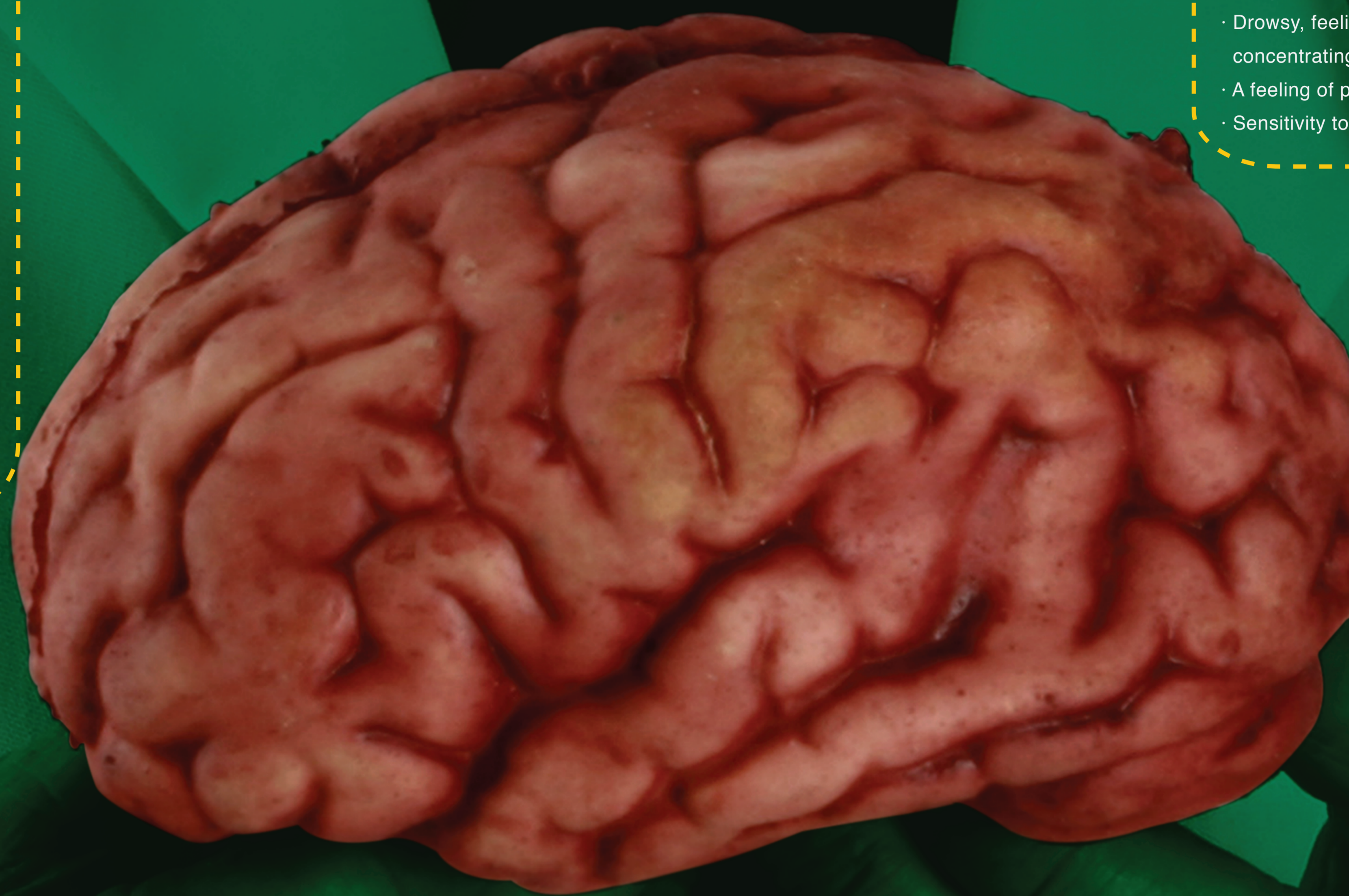
## What you need to look out for:

- Dazed, vacant or blank expression
- Lying motionless on the ground or very slow to get up
- Unsteady on feet
- Balance problems or falling over
- Incoordination
- Loss of consciousness or lack of responsiveness
- Confused or not aware of plays or events
- Grabbing or clutching of the head
- Convulsions
- More emotional or irritable

## What the player might tell you:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Confusion or feeling slowed down
- Struggling with or blurred vision
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue
- Drowsy, feeling in a fog or difficulty concentrating
- A feeling of pressure in the head
- Sensitivity to light or noise

Knowing the signs and symptoms of concussion protects them. Let's play Smarter, Safer, Rugby.



## What questions you need to ask players:

### What questions you need to ask for players 13 years of age and older:

- What venue are we at?
- What team are you playing?
- What half is it?
- Who scored last?
- Who did we play last week?
- Did we win last week?

### What questions you need to ask for children aged 5 – 12:

- Where are we now?
- Is it before or after lunch?
- What did you have last lesson?
- What is your teacher's name?

Where there is any hesitation, uncertainty or one cannot verify the information, have the player permanently removed from the game or training session, and suspect a concussion.

## The Graduated Return to Rugby After Concussion.

The graduated return to play protocol consists of **6 phases**, of which the first is the age-appropriate mandated rest phase and the last stage is the full return to rugby.

Each Stage is allocated a specific time period depending on how old the player is. For players 15 years old and younger, each stage progression lasts 48 hours, and for players 16 and older each stage progression lasts 24 hours.

**Stage 1** is complete rest of the brain and body, until no symptoms remain. For players 19 years old and younger this period is a minimum of 2 weeks off, and even longer if any signs or symptoms remain. For players aged 20 and older, this is a minimum of 1 day and the player must be sign and symptom free.

**Stage 2** is light aerobic exercise for 10-15 minutes where the player must be symptom free during the full 24 or 48 hour period, whichever is applicable.

**Stage 3** becomes more sport-specific and pushes the intensity up a bit, to where the player is exposed to running drills, where rugby specific movement patterns are added, but still includes no potential head impact activities yet.

**Stage 4** progresses the player to more complex training drills where passing can be included. The purpose here is to combine non-contact exercise, coordination and decision-making, which increases the load on the brain.

Before entering **Stage 5**, which represents normal training activities such as full contact practice, it is critical that the player is cleared by a medical doctor to do so. They should also show no signs or symptoms during this Stage and the full 24 or 48 hour period, whichever is applicable, before being given the final go ahead to return to full match play or **Stage 6**.

If a player shows any signs or symptoms during any Stage, they should consult with their treating medical doctor, and move back a stage to where they were previously sign and symptom free, and attempt to progress again after a minimum of 24 or 48 hours rest, whichever is applicable.

**Minimum stand down period after injury:**  
Players 15 years old or younger: 23 days  
Players 16-19 years old: 19 days  
Players 20 and older: 6 days

## Emergency Number.

For any potentially serious concussion, head, neck or spine rugby injury contact the toll-free BokSmart SpineLine number, 0800678678, operated by ER24.

Knowing when to take a player off protects them. Recognise and remove! Concussion is a brain injury. Let's not lose our heads on the rugby field. If in doubt, sit them out.