

CONCUSSION AND RETURN TO RIDING GUIDELINES

To make this document as easy to read as possible, we use the terms 'ride', 'riders', 'riding' and 'participants' to include anyone who comes into contact with horses as part of their work, sport or recreational activity.

INTRODUCTION

The following guidance is intended to provide information on how to recognise concussion, and how concussion should be managed, from the time of injury through to a safe return to equestrian activity. While this document contains general medical information, it doesn't constitute medical advice and should not be relied on as such. This guidance is not a substitute for medical advice from a qualified medical practitioner or healthcare provider.

While helmets save lives, concussions can still occur and can threaten the long-term health of participants.

At all levels of equestrian activity, a participant must be immediately stood down from riding and any potentially strenuous mental and physical activities if they are suspected to have a concussion.

IF IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

Concussion is an injury to the brain resulting in a disturbance of brain function. It can be caused by a direct blow to the head, but can also occur when a blow to another part of the body results in rapid movement of the head, such as whiplash type injuries.

Loss of consciousness does not always occur – in fact, it occurs in less than 10% of concussions.

Concussions can happen to participants at any age. However, children and adolescents (18 and under):

- are more susceptible to brain injury
- on average take longer than adults to recover – usually four weeks compared to two weeks
- have more significant memory and mental processing issues
- are more susceptible to rare and dangerous neurological complications, including death caused by a single or second impact.

A history of previous concussion increases the risk of further concussions, from which it may also take longer to recover.