

15: head & spinal injuries

suggested answers

1) The point of this question is for students to draw from their own experiences to build a picture - or series of more or less complementary pictures - of the signs & symptoms of concussion, & its various mechanisms of injury.

2) Signs & symptoms of concussion include loss of consciousness (even momentarily), altered or abnormal responses to command & touch, headache, loss of memory &/or wounds to the scalp or face. Itchy & Scratchy are 2 cartoon characters in the Simpsons who continually beat each other with clubs, & consequently are always “seeing stars.”

3) outdoor pursuits where helmets can help prevent serious head injury

1. skating & roller blading	2. snowboarding & skiing	3. surfing
4. horse riding	5. bike riding	6. climbing & abseiling
7. whitewater paddling	8. hang-gliding	9.

Note that this list does not include organised sports such as baseball.

4) Does the mechanism of injury suggest suspected spinal injury?

- a. Someone is lying face-down in shallow water alongside a “no diving” sign. **YES**, because they could have dived into the shallow water.
- b. A driver is slumped against the wheel of their car & the car has run into a tree. **YES**, because they clearly was in the car when the impact occurred.
- c. Someone is lying in the middle of a paddock wearing jodhpurs (i.e. horse-riding pants). **YES**, because they may well have fallen from a horse.
- d. Someone is lying face-down inside their tent. **NO**, not without further information (e.g. a fallen branch poking through the tent).
- e. Someone is leaning against a tree with blood seeping from their head. **YES**, although the evidence suggesting suspected spinal injury is more related to the sign of injury than the mechanism, which is unclear.
- f. Someone is leaning against a tree without any obvious bleeding. **NO**, not without further information.

5) The injured person would have to be moved in order to remove them from any life-threatening danger *when there was no practical alternative to moving them*. Examples might include:

- removing an injured person from the surf or other body of water
- removing them from a burning building
- removing them from a busy road
- removing them from a rockface that was unstable

Apart from moving an injured person some distance, the injured person made need to be rolled so that they can be insulated from the ground/snow with a foam mat or the like. Sometimes, shelter from the elements can be provided without moving the injured person, such as in the use of floorless, single-pole pyramid tents.

6) If a person has to be moved before paramedics arrive, rigid objects such as surfboards or sailboards could be improvised. The **Bushwalking & ski touring leadership** manual describes how to make a bush pole stretcher (2000: 215-6) The Surf Life Saving Association teaches how to do spinal carries (without equipment) as a part of the Surf Bronze qualification.

footprint answers

teacher's notes

Because our charges (young males, at least) are moving into the highest risk category for high impact injuries, we need to focus strongly on prevention, largely by encouraging students to develop the judgement to identify hazards & risky behaviour. See **Footprints** worksheets # 2, 6, 7, 65, 67, 77 & 81.

additional activities

- 1) Make hazard identification an integral part of your program wherever you venture.
- 2) Involve students in making safety rules.