

WAFC POL.8: Concussion Policy

GUIDELINES

Head impacts can be associated with serious and potentially fatal brain injuries. In the early stages of injury, it is often not clear whether you are dealing with a concussion or there is a more severe underlying structural head injury. For this reason, the most important steps in initial management include:

1. Recognising a suspected concussion.
2. Removing the player from the game.
3. Referring the player to a medical doctor for assessment.

Any player who has suffered a concussion or is suspected of having a concussion must be medically assessed as soon as possible after the injury and **must NOT** be allowed to return to play in the same game/practice session.

There must be an accredited first aider at every game and the basic rules of first aid should be used when dealing with any player who is unconscious or injured.

HEADCHECK CONCUSSION APP

The Headcheck Concussion App continues to help Trainers, Coaches and Parents/Guardians recognise the symptoms of a suspected concussion and its severity through a series of concise questions and observations to quickly identify whether a child's head injury requires an ambulance, hospital, or a GP visit. The App also assists Parents/Guardians in managing their child's recovery program based on the symptoms displayed as well as guide the Parents/Guardians on their child's safe return to school, training, and games.

The Headcheck Concussion App can be downloaded for free on both Apple and Android devices. For more information about the app, please visit www.headcheck.com.au

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR SUSPECTED CONCUSSION

RULE	DESCRIPTION OF ACTION	
1.	Assess for presence of any concussion symptoms or signs (e.g., stunned, confusion, memory problems, balance problems, headache, dizziness, not feeling right)	
2.	Implement first aid management protocol, including cervical spine immobilisation	
3.	Remove from the ground and assess using pocket CRT (Concussion Recognition Tool)	
4.	Presence of any factors for urgent hospital referral (e.g., confusion, vomiting, worsening headache).	
	YES Call for ambulance and refer to hospital.	NO Do not allow player to return to play. Refer to medical doctor for assessment (at venue, local general practice, or hospital emergency department)

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REPORTING & RECORD KEEPING

All concussions are to be reported to Competition Team as soon as possible but no later than 9am on the Monday following the game.

The relevant medical report to allow the player to return to training and matches must also be supplied to the Competitions Team before resuming training.

All medical reports will be confidentially held by Competition staff and not shared with anyone.

RETURN TO TRAIN AND PLAY PROCEDURE

The minimum requirement for returning to full training and playing matches is outlined in the AFL Nation Community Concussion Guideline as per the diagram on the following page. Players must follow the graded loading program and supply a medical certificate to local Competition Administrators before returning to full training and playing games.

A more conservative approach should be adopted for any player who has had a history of concussion or if there is any reoccurrence of symptoms. The referenced 12 days is not standard *wait and play*, it is the minimum requirement, and all concussions should be treated as unique and assessed independently.

MULTIPLE CONCUSSIONS IN A SEASON

Following any concussion, a player must receive a medical clearance to Return to Play as per the National Concussion Guidelines. If a player receives a second concussion in a season, then the player **must** be assessed by a doctor or medical practitioner who specialises in concussion management, and be medically cleared by them in order to Return to Training or Play. The WAFC can assist clubs and families in identifying doctors who specialise in the field of concussion.

If a player receives a third concussion within a season (combined across any competition i.e., club, school, AFL9's, etc) then it is highly recommended by the WAFC, that the player does not play for the remainder of the season, and should continue to be assessed / monitored by a medical specialist in Concussion Management.

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PHASES OF REST, RECOVERY AND RETURN TO PLAY FOLLOWING CONCUSSION

Focus	Goal	Requirements to move to next stage
Rest		
Rest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help speed up recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete physical and cognitive rest in the first 24 – 48 hours
Recovery		
Symptom limited activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two days of activities that do not provoke symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No concussion-related symptoms at rest or with physical or brain activity for at least 1 day and the player has successfully returned to work/school • The player should also have a medical clearance (e.g. physiotherapist, sports trainer, first aider) to confirm that the player has had no concussion-related symptoms for at least 1 day
Graded Loading – individual program		
Light / moderate aerobic exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light / moderate aerobic exercise (e.g. walking, jogging, cycling at slow to medium pace) • No resistance training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain completely free of any concussion-related symptoms
Recovery Day		
Sport-specific exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased intensity (e.g. running at an increased heart rate) and duration of activity • Add sports specific drills (e.g. goal kick, stationary handball) • Commence light resistance training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain completely free of any concussion-related symptoms • The player should also have a medical clearance (e.g. physiotherapist, sports trainer, first aider) to confirm that the player has had no concussion-related symptoms for at least 1 day
Recovery Day		
Graded Loading – full team training		
Limited contact training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return to full team training – non-contact except drills with incidental contact (incl. tackling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain completely free of any concussion-related symptoms • Player confident to return to full contact training
Recovery Day		
Clearance by a medical doctor is required before returning to the final full contact training session and competitive contact sport		
Full contact training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full team training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain completely free of any concussion-related symptoms • Player confident to participate in a match
Recovery Day		
Return to Play		

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

[AFL Community Concussion Guidelines \(2021\)](#)

[Head Injury Assessment Form](#)

[Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool \(CRT\)](#)

[Headcheck Concussion Management App](#)

[Return to Play Following Concussion – Medical Clearance Form](#)

[Return to Play Following Concussion – Checklist Form](#)