

**Heading:**

## **Management of Concussion in Community Football**

**Intro:**

Decisions regarding return to play after concussive injuries should only be made by a medical officer.

**Article:**

Following the introduction of the new concussion management guidelines for the 2011 AFL season, the AFL Medical Officers Association has produced guidelines for community football.

### **The Guidelines**

These concussion guidelines have been published by the AFL as a Position Statement on the Management of Concussion in Australian Football. It is based on guidelines developed by the AFL Medical Officers' Association which incorporate research that has been funded by the AFL Research Board and which was undertaken by Dr Michael Makdissi and Assoc Prof Paul McCrory.

In the best practice management of concussion in football, the critical element is the welfare of the player in the short and long term. These guidelines should be adhered to at all times. Decisions regarding return to play after a concussive injury (a disturbance of brain function) should only be made by a medical officer with experience in concussive injuries.

Generally, initial decisions in this area in community football will be made by the head trainer, unless the club has a medical doctor in attendance. Trainers should not be swayed by the opinions of players, coaching staff or others suggesting a premature return to play. Conversely, coaches must, in accordance with the AFL Coaches Code of Conduct, not put undue pressure on trainers or players to make such decisions. A major responsibility of coaches is their duty of care towards their players and the players' safety. This duty is highlighted when players receive a knock to the head and suffer a concussive injury.

**The key components of management of concussion include:**

- a) Suspecting the diagnosis in any player with symptoms such as confusion or headache after a knock to the head;**
- b) Referring the player for medical evaluation; and**
- c) Ensuring the player has received medical clearance before allowing that player to return to a graded training program.**

It is critical that the basic principles of return to play decisions are followed to ensure that a concussed player is fully recovered before being allowed to do so.

All players with **concussion** or **suspected concussion** need an urgent medical assessment (with a registered medical doctor). This assessment can be provided by a medical doctor present at the venue, local general practice or hospital emergency department.

A player with suspected concussion must be withdrawn from playing or training until fully evaluated by a medical practitioner and cleared to play.

**A concussed player must not be allowed to return to play before having a medical clearance.**

It is important that concussion is managed correctly and that players do not return to play or training until they are fully recovered.

**Download concussion management resources:**

Concussion Management Booklet

Concussion Management Poster

Pocket SCAT2 card

Guidelines for General Practitioners