



Concussion Recognition & Management Guidelines for PLAYERS

Concussion is a mild brain injury, caused by trauma that results in temporary dysfunction of the brain. When it occurs a player may experience symptoms and temporary loss of brain skills such as memory and thinking abilities. It is important for players to be aware of possible signs of concussion which are often subtle.

The trauma causing concussion can sometimes be obvious, but at other times may be very subtle and hardly noticed. Ask teammates, coaches or others who were present whether they observed you unconscious, dazed or confused at the time of the incident if you have some symptoms or signs. If a player with concussion returns to sport whilst still symptomatic, there is an increased risk of further injury. Therefore, **no player who has concussion, or is suspected of having concussion, should return to their sporting activity (training or playing) until cleared by a doctor.**

Some of the possible symptoms of concussion:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Memory disturbance
- Nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain
- Altered or lost vision
- Ringing in the ears

Some of the signs you may observe:

- Loss of balance
- Pale complexion
- Slow or altered verbal skills
- Mental confusion and memory loss
- Irritability
- Poor concentration
- Inappropriate behaviour

You might think that you are just not feeling your usual self! Think of concussion.

- If you observe any of these symptoms or signs **see a doctor as soon as possible.**
- If you observe deterioration in these symptoms or signs **go immediately to an accident and emergency department at your nearest hospital.**

Progression and Management

As a temporary brain dysfunction, concussion will resolve with time. This may vary from an hour or so to several days. Occasionally the brain will recover even more slowly.

The best treatment is rest from physical activity and work/study. The player should be seen by a doctor who will monitor the symptoms, signs and brain functioning. **The doctor must clear the player to return to sporting activity** and this will usually involve a stepped approach with a gradual increase in activities over a few days.

The doctor may arrange a specialist opinion (if the concussion is slow to resolve) or cognitive testing (brain functioning).

If at any stage the symptoms or signs are getting worse **seek urgent medical attention.**

Key Messages

1. **Concussion is a temporary dysfunction of the brain following trauma**
2. **Suspect concussion if you are irritable, sick, excessively fatigued, have a headache, or just not feeling your usual self**
3. **Seek medical attention – urgently if the symptoms or signs are getting worse**
4. **Rest is the best treatment followed by a gradual return to physical activity and work/study**

For more detailed information refer to the AFL brochure *Management of Concussion in Australian Football* and the *Coaches/Injury Management* section of the AFL's Community Development website www.aflcommunityclub.com.au.