



**American Football South Australia (AFSA)**  
**Concussion Management Policy**  
**Policy Owner:** AFSA Board of Management  
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## **1. Policy Overview and Purpose**

American Football South Australia (AFSA) is committed to providing a safe environment for all participants. The health, safety and welfare of players must always take precedence over training, competition outcomes, team selection or any other consideration.

This Policy establishes the minimum requirements for the recognition, management and return to participation of any player who sustains a concussion or suspected concussion while participating in AFSA sanctioned activities.

AFSA adopts the principle:

"If in doubt, sit them out."

Any player with a suspected concussion must be removed from participation immediately and managed in accordance with this Policy.

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## **2. Scope**

This Policy applies to:

- All AFSA affiliated clubs
  - All tackle and flag football programs
  - Players, coaches, officials and volunteers
  - State teams and representative programs
  - All AFSA sanctioned training sessions, games, camps and events
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## **3. Background**

Concussion is a brain injury caused by a direct or indirect force to the head or body.

A concussion may occur without loss of consciousness and symptoms may appear immediately or develop over the following hours or days.

Children and adolescents are more vulnerable to concussion and generally require longer recovery periods than adults.

AFSA adopts the Australian Institute of Sport and Australian Concussion Guidelines for Youth and Community Sport recommendations for the management of concussion.

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## 4. Executive Summary

AFSA requires that:

- All suspected concussions are treated as concussions until medically assessed.
- Any player with signs or symptoms of concussion is immediately removed from play or training.
- No player diagnosed with or suspected of having concussion may return to participation on the same day.
- All concussion incidents are recorded by the club.
- Players must be assessed by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner.
- Players must complete a Graduated Return to Sport process before returning to contact football.
- Medical clearance is required before return to contact training and competition.

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## 5. Responsibilities

AFSA

AFSA will:

- Maintain this Policy.
- Promote concussion education.
- Monitor compliance by clubs and representative programs.

Clubs

Clubs must:

- Ensure coaches and team managers understand this Policy.
- Record all suspected concussion incidents.
- Monitor player compliance with return-to-play requirements.

Coaches and Team Officials

Coaches and officials must:

- Recognise signs and symptoms of concussion.

- Remove players immediately when concussion is suspected.
- Never allow a player to return on the same day.

## Players

Players must:

- Report symptoms honestly.
- Follow medical advice.
- Comply with return-to-play requirements.

## Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians must:

- Monitor symptoms.
  - Seek appropriate medical assessment.
  - Support recovery and return-to-play requirements.
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## 6. Recognition

A player must be suspected of having sustained a concussion if they display any of the following:

### Observable Signs

- Loss of consciousness
- Lying motionless
- Slow to get up
- Unsteady balance
- Confusion
- Vacant stare
- Clutching or holding head
- Seizure activity
- Behavioural changes

### Reported Symptoms

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Vomiting

- Blurred vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling slowed down
- Fatigue
- Memory difficulties

## Orientation Questions

Examples include:

- What venue are we at today?
- Who are we playing?
- What quarter is it?
- What was the last play?

Failure to answer correctly may indicate concussion.

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## 7. Remove

Any player with suspected concussion must be:

- Immediately removed from participation.
- Assessed by appropriate medical personnel where available.
- Monitored by a responsible adult.

A player removed with a suspected concussion:

Must not return to training, competition, scrimmage, gym sessions or any football activity on the same day.

No coach, official, parent, trainer or medical practitioner may override this requirement.

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## 8. Record

The club must complete an AFSA Head Injury Incident Report within 24 hours.

The report should include:

- Player details

- Date and time of incident
- Mechanism of injury
- Observed signs and symptoms
- Action taken
- Person completing report

This report must also be submitted to AFSA.

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## **9. Refer**

All players with suspected concussion must be assessed by a qualified medical practitioner as soon as practicable.

Players displaying any red flag symptoms require urgent medical attention.

### **Red Flags**

- Deteriorating consciousness
- Increasing confusion
- Repeated vomiting
- Seizure
- Severe headache
- Weakness or numbness
- Slurred speech
- Double vision
- Significant neck pain

Emergency services should be contacted immediately if red flags are present.

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## **10. Rest and Recovery**

For the first 24–48 hours after injury, players should undertake relative rest.

This includes:

- Limiting strenuous physical activity
- Limiting excessive screen time
- Returning gradually to school, study and work

Complete isolation is not recommended unless advised by a medical practitioner.

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## 11. Graduated Return to Sport (GRTS)

A player may only commence a Graduated Return to Sport (GRTS) program once they have completed the initial period of relative rest and their symptoms are improving under the guidance of a medical practitioner or appropriately trained healthcare professional.

Each stage should take a minimum of **24 hours**. If symptoms return during any stage, the player must stop activity, rest until symptom free, and return to the previous stage after medical advice.

Stage	Activity	Examples	Minimum Duration
Stage 1	Relative Rest	Daily activities that do not worsen symptoms. Return to school, study and work as tolerated.	Minimum 24-48 hours
Stage 2	Light Aerobic Exercise	Walking, stationary bike, light jogging. No resistance training.	Minimum 24 hours
Stage 3	Football Specific Exercise	Running drills, agility drills, throwing and catching activities. No contact.	Minimum 24 hours
Stage 4	Non-Contact Team Training	Team drills, play installation, conditioning, strength training. No contact or collision activities.	Minimum 24 hours
Stage 5	Full Contact Training	Full participation in training following medical clearance.	Minimum 24 hours
Stage 6	Return to Competition	Full participation in games and sanctioned events.	Ongoing

### Minimum Return Timeframes

#### Players Aged 18 Years and Under

- Minimum 24-48 hours relative rest.
- Minimum 14 consecutive days symptom free before returning to contact training.

- Earliest return to full contact training: **Day 18.**
- Earliest return to competition: **Day 21.**

#### **Players Aged 19 Years and Over**

- Minimum 24-48 hours relative rest.
- Minimum 7 consecutive days symptom free before returning to contact training.
- Earliest return to full contact training: **Day 11.**
- Earliest return to competition: **Day 12.**

#### **Multiple Concussions**

Any player who sustains a second concussion within a 12-month period must:

- Be reviewed by a medical practitioner experienced in concussion management.
- Follow a minimum stand-down period of 21 days regardless of age.
- Obtain written medical clearance before returning to contact training or competition.

AFSA reserves the right to require specialist medical clearance for any player who experiences multiple concussions within a season or over their playing career.

### **12. Minimum Return to Play Timeframes**

Players Aged 18 Years and Under

Minimum return to competition: 21 days

Players Aged 19 Years and Over

Minimum return to competition: 12 days

These are minimum periods only and may be extended based on medical advice.

### **13. Return to Contact Training**

Before participating in contact training, the player must:

- Successfully complete Stages 1–4.

- Be symptom free.
  - Receive written medical clearance.
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#### **14. Return to Play**

A player may return to competition only when:

- They have successfully completed the Graduated Return to Sport process.
  - They remain symptom free.
  - Medical clearance has been obtained.
  - Minimum stand-down periods have been satisfied.
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#### **15. Multiple Concussions**

Any player who sustains:

- Two concussions within a 12-month period; or
- Multiple concussions throughout their playing career

must be reviewed by a medical practitioner experienced in concussion management.

Additional recovery periods may apply.

AFSA may require specialist medical clearance before approving a return to participation.

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#### **16. Non-Compliance**

Failure to comply with this Policy may result in:

- Suspension of player eligibility
- Club sanctions
- Team sanctions
- Disciplinary action under AFSA By-Laws

Player welfare will always take precedence over competition outcomes.

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## **17. Related Documents**

- AFSA Head Injury Incident Report
  - Australian Concussion Guidelines for Youth and Community Sport
  - Australian Institute of Sport Concussion and Brain Health Position Statement
  - AFSA Member Protection Policy
  - AFSA Child Safeguarding Policy
  - AFSA Code of Conduct
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## **18. Policy Review and Approval**

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with current concussion guidelines, safety standards, and AFSA governance requirements.