Victorian Churches Football Association

Concussion guidelines

Scan to access the ASC website

Scan to download the HeadCheck app

June 2024

Introduction

These guidelines are intended to provide information on how to recognise and manage concussion from the time of injury through to a safe return to playing sport.

This information is intended for individuals participating in underage and community sports – primary school age and upwards - where Healthcare Practitioners are less likely to be available to diagnose and monitor individuals with concussion during games and training.

This information is gathered from the Australian Concussion Guidelines for Youth and Community Sport document and other resources developed by the Australian Institute of Sport and Australian Sports Commission .

Always refer to a professional Healthcare Practitioner for medical advice and for a dedicated return to play timeframe.

What is concussion?

Concussion is a brain injury resulting in a disturbance of brain function. It can affect the way a person thinks, feels, and remembers things.

What causes concussion?

A concussion occurs through a collision, bump or knock with another person or object which results in a force to the head / brain. In most cases, this results in a temporary disturbance in brain function. It should be noted that concussion can also occur with relatively minor collisions or knocks and can occur even if there is no direct impact to the head.

How to recognise concussion

HeadCheck have a free concussion check application available to download on both Apple and Android devices. This is the recommended tool to use to recognise concussion. If a device is not available, the Concussion Recognition Tool 6 (CRT6) contains a simplified summary of the key signs and symptoms of concussion and may be used to aid the on-field recognition of concussion.

Visible signs or symptoms of concussion include:

- Headache
- “Pressure in head”
- Balance problems
- Nausea or vomiting
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Fatigue or low energy
- “Don’t feel right”
- More emotional
- More irritable
- Sadness
- Nervous or anxious
- Neck pain
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering
- Feeling like “in a fog”

What to do next: Immediate Management of Concussion

If in doubt, sit them out.

The HeadCheck App or Concussion Recognition Tool 6 provide recommendations for the immediate response to a suspected concussion.

If any concussion signs or symptoms are present following a collision, knock or injury, the individual should be assumed to have concussion and must be immediately removed from play or training and must not return to activity that day.

Immediately following a suspected concussion, it is important to exclude ‘red flags’ (signs that suggest the player should go straight to hospital). These include:

- Neck pain
- Seizure, fits, or convulsions
- Loss of vision or double vision

- Loss of consciousness
- Increased confusion or deteriorating conscious state (becoming drowsy)
- Weakness or numbness in more than one arm or leg
- Repeated vomiting
- Severe or increasing headache
- Increasingly restless or agitated
- Visible deformity of the skull

Once 'red flags' have been excluded, the player should be referred to a health care practitioner at the earliest opportunity and should commence a graded return to sport and learning activities.

The AIS Concussion Referral & Return Form provides a reference when discussing the suspected concussion with a Healthcare Practitioner . It outlines a clear return to sport protocol, and the requirements for clearance for return to contact activities.

Graded Return to Sport Framework for Community and Youth

The risk of complications from concussion is increased if a player is permitted to return to sport before they have fully recovered.

The graded return to sport framework for community and youth assists players, coaches and parents with concussion management through the recovery process. It also outlines recommended time frames for a safe return to sport/learn. This framework should be followed together with a Healthcare Practitioner.

It is important to note that the graded return to sport framework requires those under 19 years of age *and* those without a dedicated Healthcare Practitioner to guide recovery, to be symptom free for 14 days (at rest) before return to contact training, and not return to competitive contact sport until a minimum of 21 days from the time of concussion.

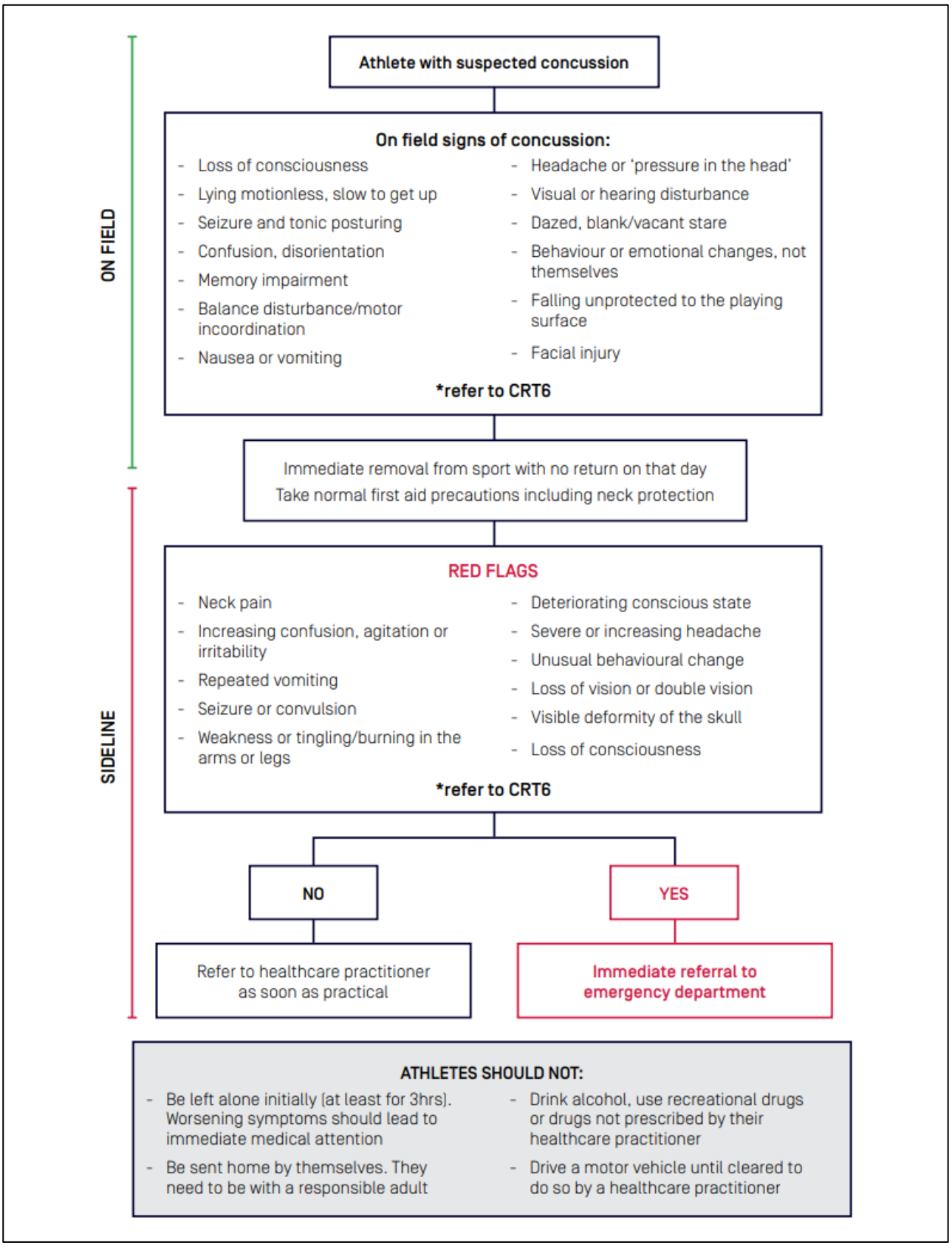
To be clear, that is not 14 days from the time of concussion. It is 14 days from when the player becomes symptom-free.

Next steps

The VCFA recommends to each club to promote this document and appoint a Concussion Officer who can familiarise themselves with the recommendations and guidelines as set in this document and by the Australian Sports Commission.

If there is any doubt whether a player has suffered a concussion, always sit them out.

To ensure player welfare and health, always refer to a Healthcare Practitioner for tests and advice on concussion treatments and a return to play timeline.



Flowchart taken from "Australian Concussion Guidelines for Youth and Community Sport"; a resource available on the Australian Sports Commission Concussion website.

References

- **Australian Sports Commission (ASC):** Concussion in Australian Sport website: https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/
    - **For players:** https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/athlete
    - **For parents:** https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/parents_and_teachers
    - **For coaches:** https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/coaches_and_support_staff
- **Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)**: Australian Concussion Guidelines for Youth and Community Sport: https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1133994/37382_Concussion-Guidelines-for-community-and-youth-FA-acc-v2.pdf
- **Australian Institute of Sport (AIS)**: Concussion Referral and Clearance Form: https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/1133929/37382_Concussion-referral-and-clearance-form-FA-acc.pdf
- **Australian Sports Commission (ASC):** Graded Return to Sport Framework (Community & Youth) document: https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1133466/GRADED-RETURN-TO-SPORT-FRAMEWORK-COMMUNITY-AND-YOUTH.pdf
- **Australian Football League (AFL):** AFL Community Concussion Guidelines: https://play.afl/learning-resource/afl-community-concussion-guidelines
- **Football Australia (FA):** Concussion Policy: https://www.playfootball.com.au/sites/play/files/2022-10/Football%20Australia%20Concussion%20Policy.pdf
- **HeadCheck:** Application: https://www.headcheck.com.au/download/