

**Western Suburbs PSSA Concussion Policy- Protocols for Concussion Management**

School Sport adheres to the recommendations and guidelines of Sports Medicine Australia’s Concussion in Sport Policy (v1.0 January 2018). Under this policy, any athlete with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from play.

These protocols are intended to assist athletes, officials, teachers, parents in management of athletes who have received a head injury and are not intended to replace medical assessment and treatment.

**What is Concussion?**

Disturbance in brain function caused by direct or indirect force to the head. Concussion results in a variety of signs and symptoms, some are very subtle, and most do not result in a loss of consciousness. Rest followed by gradual return to play is the main treatment.

**Practice and Game Day Management**

1. **Recognise** A potential head injury or concussion must be acknowledged if an athlete has any signs, symptoms or fails to answer any of the memory assessment questions asked by a teacher after a head or body collision.
2. **Remove.** Any athlete with signs or symptoms of a potential head injury or concussion must be removed from play immediately and must not return to play or training that day. Always adhere to the first aid rules, including airway, breathing, circulation and spinal immobilization particularly for the unconscious and suspected spinal injuries. Athlete must only be removed by a qualified health professional.

**If there is an observable knock to the head, the athlete must be taken through the concussion assessment, even if no other signs or symptoms are present, the athlete must take a mandatory minimum 24 hour rest and t**he Head Injury Factsheet is to be given to the athlete, family member or guardian by the school sports teacher who was present at the time of the incident. An absence of signs or symptoms is not a reliable indicator, because signs and symptoms may emerge up to 48 hours after the impact.

1. **Refer.** All players with potential head injury or suspected concussion need a medical assessment by a registered medical doctor as soon as possible.  **If there are any doubts about the athlete or red flags call an ambulance** or refer to the emergency department. The Head Injury Factsheet and Western Suburbs PSSA Head Injury Recognition and Referral Form should be given to the athlete or family member/guardian. The latter should be returned once signed by the medical doctor to the school sports teacher and/ Principal. Principal to Call Incident and Support Hotline on 1800 811 523  
   **Follow Up Management** (The rest and return to play guidelines of the relevant Sporting Body must be followed, if none then the following will be used as the minimum.)
2. **Rest.** Cognitive and physical rest is crucial to recover from concussion. The minimum rest for adults is 24 hours while children and adolescents require a longer rest time **48 hours recommended. The rest period may be longer if symptoms take longer to resolve.**
3. **Return**. Athletes should not return until they have **a medical clearance** and returned to school and daily living without increased signs or symptoms of concussion. Return to sport should be in a graduated manner and supervised by their medical practitioner. This is a six-step process with a minimum 24 hours between each stage, if a player becomes symptomatic at any stage, they should drop back to the previous symptom free level and try to progress again after 24 hours. An athlete can only return to full training and playing when they have fully recovered, however children should not be permitted to return to unrestricted sport in fewer than 14 days (after symptoms have resolved). Most concussion resolve in 10-14 days, if still symptomatic refer them back to their medical practitioner.

**Sources** Sports Medicine Australia 2018, *Concussion in Sport Policy*, Sports Medicine Australia <https://sma.org.au/resources-advice/concussion/>Elkington, L, Manzanero, S & Hughes, D 2017, *Australian Institute of Sport and Australian Medical Association* *Concussion in Sport Position Statement*, Australian Sports Commission, <https://concussioninsport.gov.au/>

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