



EAST MALVERN KNIGHTS JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB

CONCUSSION POLICY: Update April 2024

Introduction

Concussion is an issue which must be taken seriously. The immediate and also potentially long-lasting effects, particularly on children, means that the Club must have a policy in place for the management of any of our players who have:

- (a) to leave the field because of a concussion or suspected concussion; or
- (b) subsequently been diagnosed as suffering from concussion.

Application

This policy applies to all players playing with the Club.

Reason Behind the Policy

There is a growing movement in Australian Rules Football and in other contact sports to address the issue of concussion and head injuries.

As set out in the : AIS Concussion and Brain Health Position Statement, February 2024

“Head impacts can be associated with serious and potentially fatal brain injuries.

In the early stages of injury, it is often not clear whether you are dealing with a concussion or there is a more severe underlying structural head injury. For this reason, the most important steps in initial management include:

- (i) recognising a suspected concussion;*
- (ii) removing the player from the game; and*
- (iii) referring the player to an appropriately trained healthcare provider for assessment”.*

In March 2021 the Club issued its first formal Concussion Policy. On 1st February 2024 the AIS released its Concussion and Brain Health Position Statement, and on 27th March 2024, the AFL released The Management of Sports Related Concussion in Australian Football. The Club subsequently amended its Policy to be consistent with the AIS, AFL and SMJFL Policy in April 2024.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the SMJFL - AFL Community Concussion Guidelines. Those Guidelines can be accessed in a link at the end of this Policy.

Importance Of Trainer's Decision Regarding Concussion Or Suspected Concussion

For every game a team will have a trainer in attendance at the game. The trainer is the primary point of medical contact for any medical incident on the field.

In relation to concussion or suspected concussion, the trainer has the ultimate decision as to whether or not a player:

- (a) leaves the field;
- (b) remains off the field for the duration of the game.

The coach and parents/guardians of the player must accept the trainer's decision in this regard.

When playing home games at D W Lucas Oval, Basil Reserve or Stanley Grose Reserve, the Ground Manager for those venues is a qualified first aider and there is also rostered first aid personnel at the venue. A trainer can consult either the Ground Manager or the First Aid personnel in the assessment and treatment of a player.

Policy

The Policy is divided into two sections:

- (i) game day management of concussion/head injury; and
- (ii) return to training and playing/medical clearance.

Game Day Management

To assist trainers in assessing whether a player has suffered a concussion they are to use the "Concussion Recognition Tool 6" ("**CRT 6**") which is attached to this Policy. A copy of the CRT 6 is contained in the first aid kit for the team.

If there is a suspicion that a player may have suffered a concussion then the default position adopted by the Club and its trainers is "**If in doubt, sit them out**". The trainer is to use the CRT 6 to assess whether a player has suffered a concussion or may have suffered a concussion.

Step one of the CRT 6 lists the "red flags" ("**red flags**") which include:

- Neck pain or tenderness.
- Double vision.
- Weakness or tingling/burning in arms or legs.
- Severe or increasing headache.
- Seizure or convulsion.
- Loss of consciousness.
- Deteriorating conscious state.
- Vomiting.
- Increasingly restless, agitated or combative.

If a player presents with any red flags the trainer, coach or other person in charge should **call 000 immediately** and request urgent attendance as this is a potential medical emergency.

If a player does not present with any red flag symptoms but, after using the CRT 6 assessment, a trainer believes the player has suffered a suspected concussion, the player must not return to play in that game and is deemed to suffer a suspected concussion in accordance with this Policy.

In those circumstances the player must be referred to an appropriate healthcare practitioner to formally diagnose whether that player has suffered a concussion.

If the qualified healthcare practitioner diagnoses the player as having suffered a concussion that player will enter the graded return to play concussion protocol (link/appendix attached) .

If the qualified healthcare practitioner:

- (a) concludes that the player has not suffered a concussion; and
- (b) certifies them fit to return to training and playing;

then the player is permitted to return to training and playing, and must supply a certificate from the treating practitioner to the Club concussion officer.

Graded Return to Play

Once a player has been formally diagnosed with concussion, they enter the AFL GRTP protocol

<https://play.afl/sites/default/files/2024-03/The-Management-of-Sport-Related-Concussion-in-Australian-Football-Mar-24.pdf>

It is expected that the appropriately trained health care practitioner will manage the clinical return to play process, progressions and clearance. For the sake of clarity, a player must

- I. Not return to play earlier than day 21 post concussion**
- II. Be symptom free for 14 days before returning to contact training and match simulation**
- III. Obtain written medical clearance from an appropriately trained healthcare practitioner before returning to contact training and match simulation**

Return to Training and Playing/Medical Clearance

If a player is required to enter the concussion protocol, the player must be assessed by a qualified healthcare practitioner, in the company of a parent/guardian, , to determine whether the player is fit to return to contact training (“**medical clearance**”).

In those circumstances the player is only permitted to return to contact training and playing if the appropriately trained practitioner certifies them fit to do so.

Reporting to the Club

The Club Concussion Officer's ("CCO") email is: emjfc.concussion@gmail.com and concussion@eastmalvernknights.com.au.

Once clearance has been received from the practitioner it must be given to the CCO and the player's Team Manager, to prove the player has a medical clearance, before they can return to contact training.

If a player:

- (a) leaves the field because of a concussion or suspected concussion; or
- (b) is subsequently diagnosed with concussion –

then the Team Manager or the Trainer of that team must report the incident to the CCO.

Upon the player receiving the medical clearance, the clearance must be provided to:

- (a) the Team Manager of the team in which the player is playing; and
- (b) the CCO.

Until the medical clearance is provided to the Team Manager and the CCO, the player will not be permitted to return to contact training or play in games.

If Player Suffers a Concussion Outside of Playing with the Club

A number of our players play football for their schools outside of playing with the Club. They may also engage in activity outside of playing with the Club which carries with it the risk of concussion.

If a player has been diagnosed as suffering concussion as a result of an event outside of playing with the Club, then the parent/guardian of the player must inform the:

- (a) player's Team Manager; and
- (b) the CCO.

If a qualified healthcare practitioner diagnoses the player as having suffered a concussion outside of the Club environment, that player will enter the graded return to play concussion protocol.

Reporting an incident to the SMJFL

If the Trainer, Team Manager, Coach or Assistant Coach (“**Coaching staff**”) are of the opinion that the suspected concussion or concussion sustained by a player in their team was a result of rough or unfair play from an opposing player (for example, a sling tackle or deliberate strike) and the umpire did not penalise the offending player (whether by way of free kick, yellow or red card) then the team manager is to report the incident to the SMJFL.

Attached Documents

Attached are:

- The Management of Sport-Related Concussion in Australian Football, March 2024
- The AIS Position Statement on Concussion and Brain Health. 2024
- CRT 6

Links to the Child SCAT 6, Royal Children’s Hospital Information Sheet regarding head injury and return to school and sport, material from Sport Australia relevant to concussion in sport and the SMJFL – AFL Community Concussion Guidelines, are below:

<https://play.afl/sites/default/files/2024-03/The-Management-of-Sport-Related-Concussion-in-Australian-Football-Mar-24.pdf>

[FINAL_Concussion-and-Brain-Health-Position-Statement-2024-FA \(1\).pdf](#)

[CRT6 \(1\).pdf](#)

[SCAT-6.pdf](#)

[Child-SCAT-6.pdf](#)

https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Head_injury_return_to_school_and_sport/

https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/medical_practitioners#acute_cerebral_oedema

<https://play.afl/learning-resource/afl-community-concussion-guidelines#article-0>

<https://play.afl/learning-resource/afl-community-concussion-guidelines>



Concussion Recognition & Management Guidelines for PARENTS

Concussion is a mild brain injury, caused by trauma that results in temporary dysfunction of the brain. When it occurs a child may experience symptoms and temporary loss of brain skills such as memory and thinking abilities. It is important for parents of young athletes 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 your child or an adult who were present whether they were unconscious, dazed or confused at the time of the incident if they have some symptoms or signs. If a child with concussion returns to sport whilst still symptomatic, there is an increased risk of further injury to the child. 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 your child is just not themselves! Think of concussion.

- If you observe any of these symptoms or signs in your child 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 school. The child should be seen by a doctor who will monitor the symptoms, signs and brain functioning. The doctor will determine when the child may return to school. The child must not return to sport until successful return to school and learning. **The doctor must clear your child 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 your child's 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 your child is irritable, complains of a headache, is sick, excessively fatigued or just not themselves
3. Seek medical attention – urgently if the symptoms or signs are getting worse
4. Rest is the best treatment followed by a return to school, before a gradual return to physical activity

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.