



DCWFC CONCUSSION POLICY 2024

Concussion management is about the short- and long-term health and wellbeing of our players.

Good concussion management relies on:

- education and training
- sound procedures
- honest and timely communication between players, families, coaching staff, medics/trainers, team managers and club officials.

All of the above stakeholders have a role to play in concussion management and are encouraged to be familiar with the following resources:

- [AFL Community Concussion Guidelines](#)
- [The Management of Sport-Related Concussion in Australian Football](#) (March 2024)
- [AFL Stages of Graded Return To Play](#)
- [AFL minimum 21-day return to play protocol](#) (6 March 2024)
- [AIS Australian Concussion Guidelines for Youth and Community Sport](#) (2024)

It is important to note that the guidelines for concussion management in Australia and within the AFL are changing as new evidence emerges. DCWFC's policy and procedures should be reviewed annually, and/or in line with any relevant regulatory changes.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

Players and families:

All players and families are strongly encouraged to complete the [Connectivity Sport-Related Concussion Short Course](#) during pre-season. This is a free, 15-minute course and is available to families when they register with PlayHQ.

This expectation should be communicated clearly and regularly to players and families during the registration process and pre-season.

Club officials:

At a minimum, all club officials (committee members, coaching staff, medics/trainers and team managers) must complete the [Connectivity Sport-Related Concussion Short Course](#) during pre-season.

The following people have responsibility for ensuring course completion and appropriate record keeping. A course completion list (including names and dates) should be emailed to the Medic Coordinator/s by email to medic@dcwfc.com.au prior to the start of Round 1:

- Club President – ensures all committee members have completed the course



- Football Operations Manager – ensures all coaching staff have completed the course
- Team Manager Coordinator – ensures all team managers have completed the course
- Medic Coordinator/s – ensures all medics have completed the course

The AFL also suggests a free Concussion Management webinar – [A Practical Guide to Concussion Management in Community Football](#).

Ongoing education and training:

The Medic Coordinator/s will arrange ongoing education and training on concussion management as required.

All medics will be required to attend an in-person information session during the pre-season to go through concussion and other related policies and procedures, and receive their team's medic bag.

CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE:

DCWFC's concussion management procedure is based on the following recommended approaches:

- If in doubt, sit them out
- Recognise-Remove-Refer

Please note:

- Not all head knocks result in a concussion or suspected concussion.
- Head knocks are not the only way a person can sustain a concussion or suspected concussion. Concussion can also occur through tackles and bumps where there has been no noticeable head impact.
- The team medic has final say regarding management of any suspected concussion.

1. RECOGNISE AND REMOVE

Where the medic suspects there has been a concussion to a player, or the player self reports a suspected concussion, the player must be immediately removed from play or training.

2. FIRST AID ASSESSMENT

The medic should use the [Concussion Recognition Tool 6](#) (in all Medic folders) to determine if a suspected concussion has occurred.



If (A) there are no visible clues or symptoms of concussion and (B) no reason to suspect a concussion, the player can return to play or training. The medic should inform the parent/guardian of what has happened.

Remember to be conservative: If in doubt, sit them out.

If there are visible clues or symptoms of concussion or reason to suspect a concussion (remember, onset of concussion symptoms can be delayed):

- the player must not return to play or training and,
- the player must be monitored regularly until they are handed over to a parent/guardian or medical care.

The medic must complete the **AFL Match Day Head Injury Assessment & Referral Form**. This form has two pages for players U14s and above, and three pages for U12s and below. The medic must complete the **Sideline Form** about what they observed and the player must complete the **Player Form** about what they experienced. For Under 12s and below, the parent/guardian must also complete a form.

[Match Day Head Injury Assessment and Referral Form – Ages 13 and Above](#) - 2 pgs
[Match Day Head Injury Assessment and Referral Form – Ages 12 and under](#) - 3 pgs

The medic must take a screenshot of all parts of the form and email them to medic@dcwfc.com.au on the day of the incident. The completed form is given to the player/family to take to the GP.

3. REFER

On the day of the incident, the medic must:

- Give the **AFL Match Day Head Injury Assessment & Referral Form** (all pages) to the player's parent/guardian.
- The player must take all parts of this form to a GP as soon as practical for assessment and possible confirmation of a diagnosis of concussion.
- Inform the parent/guardian that:
 - o the player should seek medical advice for confirmation of a diagnosis
 - o return to training is gradual and dependent on whether symptoms recur
 - o they need to understand the [Stages of Graded Return to Play](#) protocol (21-day minimum)



- following symptom-free non-contact training, the player must return to the GP for medical clearance to return to full-contact training and games.
- The medic should give a copy of the **AFL Stages of Graded Return to Play** document to parents/player.

The parent/guardian can contact the DCWFC Medic Coordinators if they have any questions or concerns at medic@dcwfc.com.au.

3. COMMUNICATE

The medic must then communicate to the coach and team manager, either in-person or by phone or email, that:

- a. there has been a suspected concussion
- b. the player's parents have received the **AFL Match Day Head Injury Assessment & Referral Form** (including the **Stages of Graded Return to Play** protocol),
- c. the player's return to training will be gradual and dependent on the return or absence of any ongoing symptoms
- d. the player cannot return to full contact training (or games) until the [Medical Clearance Form](#) has been signed by a GP authorising return to sport, and returned to the medic.

4. MEDICAL REVIEW

The player should be seen by a GP (preferably a GP with experience in concussion management) to assess the suspected concussion and determine if a concussion has occurred. A longer appointment should be booked to allow time for examination.

If the GP suspects a concussion, the player will enter into the four stages of Graded Return to Play Protocol (21 day minimum). The player must go back to the GP during Stage 3 of the Protocol to get the [Medical Clearance Form](#) signed to allow for return to full contact training and games.

If the GP says there was no concussion, they must provide a signed letter that includes the following statements:

- 1- that they have physically examined the player
- 2- that there is definitely no concussion
- 3- that the player can return to full contact training and play.

It is important to be aware that if the GP puts any conditions on the return to training or play, then the player must enter into the Graded Return to Play Protocol.



The completed Medical Clearance Form and/or any GP letters must be returned to the medic before the player can take part in full contact training. The form is to be kept in the team's Medic folder.

5. RETURN

Many people play an important role in the player's safe return to play. Their return relies on honesty and communication between player, family, coach and medics.

The player's return to training is gradual, dependent on whether symptoms return and must follow the [AFL Stages of Graded Return to Play](#) protocol. The player and all coaching staff must be familiar with this protocol.

Under the new AFL community guidelines, the earliest a player can return to play after a suspected concussion is on the **21st day** after the day on which the concussion was sustained and provided that the player has safely progressed through each phase of the return-to-play program with no symptoms.

The day of the incident is considered Day 0 meaning the player will miss at least 2 games. The AFL suggests most players will take longer to safely move through the four stages of Graded Return to Play.

The risk of injury or another concussion is substantially higher for the returning player post-concussion. Therefore, the player should wear a coloured bib during training so all players and coaching staff know the player is only to be involved in non-contact training activities.

Medical clearance is required before a player can take part in full contact training. The Medical Clearance Form must be provided to the team medic before the player can take part in full contact training.

If there is any return of symptoms, the player should be removed from training/play and seek medical advice.

At least one full contact training session (preferably two) is to be completed, symptom-free, before the player can return to a game.

EXTERNAL GAMES:

Where DCWFC players also train or play AFL games outside of the club environment (ie at school or in representative competitions), the player is required to inform their coach and/or team medic if they have sustained a concussion or suspected concussion in the course of



any external games. This information should be provided before the player participates in any further training or games with DCWFC.

Coaches and medics must communicate any relevant information to each other in a timely manner to ensure appropriate management at training and games.

MORE INFORMATION:

For more information or clarification on this policy or related procedures, please contact the Medic Coordinator/s at medic@dcwfc.com.au.

LINKS TO FORMS:

[Match Day Head Injury Assessment and Referral Form – Ages 13 and Above](#) - 2 pages

[Match Day Head Injury Assessment and Referral Form – Ages 12 and under](#) - 3 pages

[AFL Medical Clearance Form](#)

[Stages of Graded Return to Play](#)

LAST UPDATED:

This policy was last updated on 14.05.2024.

This policy was approved by DCWFC on 20.05.2024.