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# FERNTREE GULLY EAGLES JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB CONCUSSION POLICY 2021

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## **PURPOSE**

To develop a Club Policy, reflective of AFL guidelines, in the management of concussion to encourage a more conservative management approach (based on expert opinion at the time)

## **CONCUSSION– A DEFINITION**

Concussion is a brain injury, caused by trauma, which results in temporary dysfunction of the brain. When it occurs, a player may experience symptoms and temporary loss of some brain skills such as memory and thinking abilities.

It is important for coaches, training staff and parents/guardians to be aware of signs of concussion which are often subtle.

### **Loss of consciousness is NOT the only symptom of concussion**

#### **Some of the possible symptoms of concussion:**

- Difficulty staying awake.
- Headaches or migraines
- Forgetfulness or memory problems
- Vomiting
- General unwell feeling or feeling a bit 'off'
- Dizziness
- Confusion, slurred speech, or unusual behaviour
- Blurred or double vision

#### **Some of the signs observed may include:**

- Loss of balance
- Irritability
- Pale complexion
- Poor concentration
- Slow or altered verbal skills
- Inappropriate behaviour
- Mental confusion and memory loss
- Not feeling your usual self

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The *Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football Club* acknowledges concussion is an issue which both the club, and the AFL, have always taken very seriously.

Head impacts can be associated with serious and potentially fatal brain injuries. There are concerns relating to a possible increased likelihood of the development of depression, dementia and other forms of cognitive impairment later in life, as a result of impacts to the head during games or practice, and not just those hits resulting in concussion.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

- To be following the best practice management of concussion in football.
- To ensure the critical element is the welfare of the player in the short and long term.
- These guidelines should be adhered to at all times.

- Generally, initial decisions in the area of concussion in community football will be made by the trainer, unless the club has a medical doctor in attendance.
- Trainers should not be swayed by the opinions of players, coaching staff or others suggesting a premature return to play.
- Conversely, coaches must, in accordance with the AFL Coaches Code of Conduct, not put undue pressure on trainers or players to make such decisions.
- A major responsibility of coaches is their duty of care towards their players and the players' safety. This duty is highlighted when players receive a knock to the head and suffer a concussive injury.

## **RISKS**

- Within community AFL there is no ability for immediate medical clearance and definitive diagnosis of concussion.
- For this reason, a conservative management plan is taken with all suspected concussive injuries in community AFL.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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:

1. Recognising a suspected concussion;
2. Removing the player from the game;
3. Referring the player to a medical doctor for assessment.
4. Ensure the player has received medical clearance for a **graduated return to training**

Any player who has suffered a concussion or is suspected of having a concussion must be medically assessed as soon as possible after the injury and must NOT be allowed to return to play in the same game/practice session.

### **AFL Guidelines for Concussion Management:**

- There should be a trained first aider (trainer with current first aid qualifications) at every game and the principles of first aid, including management of the cervical spine, should be used when dealing with any player who is unconscious or injured.
- A player with suspected concussion must be withdrawn from playing or training immediately.
- Players must not be allowed to return to play in the same game or train in the same practice session.
- Player must have a minimum 12-day mandatory break from playing matches.
- Player must obtain a written medical clearance from a Medical Practitioner (i.e. General Practitioner, Sports Doctor, Neurologist) to return to training and playing. The medical clearance must state that the player has been cleared from a concussion injury.
- Player must only recommence 'usual contact' training when symptom free and physically able to complete full training sessions.
- Recommend that any player with symptoms persisting for more than 5 days (post the concussion) seek specialist opinion prior to resuming training and playing matches.

**For children (players aged 5-17):**

**The child is not to return to play or sport until they have successfully returned to school/learning, without worsening of symptoms.**

**Symptom assessment in the child often requires the addition of parent and/or teacher input.**

- It is reasonable for a child to miss a day or two of school after concussion, but extended absence is uncommon and specialist opinion should be sought.
- All Players should be returned to play in a graduated fashion.
- It is critical that the basic principles of return to play decisions are followed to ensure that a concussed player is fully recovered before being allowed to do so.
- The “concussion rehabilitation” program should be supervised by the treating medical practitioner and should follow a step-wise symptom limited progression, as Royal Children’s Hospital advice below:

<b>ROYAL CHILDRENS HOSPITAL GUIDELINES FOR RETURN TO SPORT FOLLOWING MEDICAL CLEARANCE</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each step takes at least 24 hours (a total of at least one week).</li> <li>• Child should only move to the next step only if they have no concussion complaints.</li> <li>• If concussion complaints recur, go back to the previous step.</li> <li>• If child cannot advance to the next step without concussion complaints, should see the doctor before returning to playing sport.</li> </ul> <p><b>If the player is symptomatic for more than 5 days, then review by a medical practitioner, expert in the management of concussion, is recommended (see resources)</b></p>		
<b>Rehabilitation stage</b>	<b>Exercise at each stage</b>	<b>Goal</b>
1. No activity	Complete physical and mental rest.(includes physical and mental rest, avoiding TV and electronic device use)	Recovery
2. Attends full day of school without symptoms re-occurring		
3. Light aerobic exercise 24-48hrs after symptoms cease	Walking, swimming or stationary cycling. No resistance training.	Increase heart rate
<b>Medical Clearance before progress to Stage 4</b>		
4. Sport-specific exercise	Running drills No head impact activities.	Add movement
5. Non-contact training drills	Passing drills in football May start progressive resistance training.	Exercise and coordination
6. Full-contact practice	Participate in normal training activities	Restore confidence and assess function by coaching staff
7. Return to competition	Normal game play. However, before returning to normal game play, should have a check-up with their GP.	Close monitoring of child by coach / trainer

## RESPONSIBILITIES

### Parents/Guardian:

- To not put undue pressure on trainers, coaches or players to return to play in the event of suspected concussion.
- On diagnosis of suspected concussion to follow club guidelines regarding player return to play.
- To provide honest feedback to coaching staff regarding players successful return to school/learning, without worsening of symptoms.
- On diagnosis of suspected concussion to provide the club with medical clearance for player before starting training/rehabilitation Stage 4.
- To inform coaching staff of concussion injuries received outside of the club (for example within other sports / school).

### Coach:

- Coaches must, in accordance with the AFL Coaches Code of Conduct, not put undue pressure on trainers or players to return to play in the event of suspected concussion. Any coaches doing so will be expected to be reported to club executive.
- Withdraw player from matches for mandatory 12 day period
- Ensure player has provided a written medical clearance from a Medical Practitioner (i.e. General Practitioner, Sports Doctor, Neurologist) prior to return to training
- Only recommence 'usual contact' training when symptom free and physically able to complete full training sessions.
- Must follow return to play guidelines as AFL/RCH guidelines.

### Trainer:

- Maintain competency requirements for trainer certification as EFL/AFL requirements
- Carry CRT tool at all times on match day / training ([Concussion Recognition Tool](#))
- Completion of injury report at completion of game: provided to Team Manager
- Completion of [Head Injury Assessment Form - for trainers](#) : provided to parents/guardian for completion by medical practitioner
- Written information x2 provided to parent/guardian at time of injury
  - [EFL - medical centres \(concussion & injuries\)](#)
  - [Royal Childrens Hospital - return to sport after concussion head injury](#)

### Team Manager:

- Ensure injury report is received from trainer at time of incident.
- Provide club with injury report within 24hrs of incident.
- Withdraw player from matches for mandatory 12-day period
- Ensure medical clearance certification received before training.
- Provide club with medical certification
- Refer any delays or absence of medical certification to club executive.

### Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football Club:

- Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football Club acknowledges the minimum requirement for injury support at Auskick/junior level is to have someone present with first aid qualifications.
- At all matches the club will have accredited trainers present as EFL/AFL guidelines.
- All Junior coaching accreditation programs provided will involve a module on injury prevention and management in which concussion is covered as a key area of responsibility, including the steps to be taken when a player is suspected of having concussion
- Provision concussion information to all players and parents annually ([Concussion Guidelines for Players](#) & [Concussion Guidelines for Parents](#))
- Provision of [Concussion Guidelines for Coaches](#) to all coaches annually
- [Concussion Presentation](#) & [Video : Concussion in children](#) agenda first coaches meeting

- Should medical clearance not be received for a player, Ferntree Gully Junior Football Club supports the player being withdrawn from game/training until such clearance is received.
- Any grievance will be dealt with by Club Executive committee
- Documentation of suspected concussion with clearance certification will be kept securely for 7 years

## **WHAT IS AND IS NOT IN SCOPE**

*Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football club* are not responsible for the monitoring and management of concussive injuries received by players outside of match day / training sessions if not informed of such injuries in writing by parent/guardian.

## **RESOURCES**

[Head Check Concussion Management](#)

[Concussion Management Guidelines](#)

[AFL Community Concussion Guidelines](#)

[Concussion in sport - AIS and Aust Gov website and resources](#)

[Head Injury Assessment Form - for trainers](#)

[Pocket Concussion Tool](#)

[Concussion Guidelines for Players](#)

[Royal Children's Hospital - return to sport after concussion head injury](#)

[Royal Children's Hospital - Head Injury Fact Sheet](#)

[EFL - medical centres \(concussion & injuries\)](#)

[Concussion Guidelines for Parents](#)

[Concussion Guidelines for Coaches](#)

[Concussion Presentation](#)

[Video : Concussion in children](#)

[Concussion Video \(American\) for parents and players](#)

## **POLICY REVIEW**

This Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant, practical and that it reflects community expectations and legal requirements. The Policy will be reviewed in the first instance by Trainer Co-Ordinator and Executive Committee, and thereafter annually as part of the club's Strategic Plan Review process.

## **SUMMARY**

These concussion guidelines have been developed from a Position Statement on the Management of Concussion in Australian Football, published by the AFL. It is based on guidelines developed by the AFL Medical Officers' Association which incorporate research that has been funded by the AFL

Research Board and which was undertaken by Dr Michael Makdissi, Assoc Prof Paul McCrory and Assoc Prof Gavin Davis.

This document was tabled to the Executive committee and the above stated Policy was voted upon and endorsed/accepted by majority vote.

**Ferntree Gully Eagles Junior Football Club**  
**Executive & General Committee**  
**Original 2017**  
**Updated April 2021**