

School of Sport Education NT Protocols for Concussion Management

The School of Sport Education NT adheres to the recommendations of The Australian Concussion Guidelines For Youth and Community Sport released in February 2024 by the AIS in collaboration with Sports Medicine Australia. Under these guidelines, any athlete with a suspected concussion should be removed from play immediately.

These protocols are to assist athletes, officials, teachers, and parents in management of head injuries 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 questions after a head or body collision. Concussion Recognition Tool CRT6 can be used to help identify concussion.



What is the Concussion Recognition Tool?

A concussion is a brain injury. The Concussion Recognition Tool 6 (CRT6) is to be used by non-medically trained individuals for the identification and immediate management of suspected concussion. It is not designed to diagnose concussion.

Recognise and Remove

Red Flags: CALL AN AMBULANCE

If ANY of the following signs are observed or complaints are reported after an impact to the head or body the athlete should be immediately removed from play/game/activity and transported for urgent medical care by a healthcare professional (HCP):

- Neck pain or tenderness
- Seizure, 'fits', or convulsion
- Loss of vision or double vision
- Loss of consciousness
- Increased confusion or deteriorating conscious state (becoming less responsive, drowsy)
- Weakness or numbness/tingling in more than one arm or leg
- Repeated Vomiting
- Severe or increasing headache
- Increasingly restless, agitated or combative
- Visible deformity of the skull

Remember

- In all cases, the basic principles of first aid should be followed: assess danger at the scene, check airway, breathing, circulation; look for reduced awareness of surroundings or slowness or difficulty answering questions.
- Do not attempt to move the athlete (other than required for airway support) unless trained to do so.
- Do not remove helmet (if present) or other equipment.
- Assume a possible spinal cord injury in all cases of head injury.
- Athletes with known physical or developmental disabilities should have a lower threshold for removal from play.

If there are no Red Flags, identification of possible concussion should proceed as follows:

Concussion should be suspected after an impact to the head or body when the athlete seems different than usual. Such changes include the presence of **any one or more** of the following: visible clues of concussion, signs and symptoms (such as headache or unsteadiness), impaired brain function (e.g. confusion), or unusual behaviour.

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 immobilisation particularly for the unconscious and suspected spinal injuries.
3. **Rest.** If there was an observable knock to the head, the athlete must be taken through the concussion assessment and even if no other signs or symptoms are present the

athlete must have a mandatory minimum 24–48 hour rest. The Head Injury Factsheet must be given to the athlete, parent or guardian. An absence of signs or symptoms is not a reliable indicator, as signs and symptoms may emerge up to 48 hours after the impact.

4. **Refer.** All players with a 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 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 healthcare practitioner.

Follow Up Management

The Graded Return to Sport Framework must be followed before students return to sport, both in training and competition. rest and return to play guidelines of the Sporting Body must be followed, if none then the following will be used as the minimum.

Figure 3: Graded return to sport framework for community and youth sport

