

THE MANAGEMENT OF CONCUSSION IN AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

- Concussion refers to a disturbance in brain function caused by trauma.
- Complications can occur if the player is returned to play before having fully recovered from injury.
- **The key components of management include:**
 - a) **Suspecting the diagnosis in any player with symptoms such as confusion or headache after a knock to the head;**
 - b) **Referring the player for medical evaluation; and**
 - c) **Ensuring that the player has received medical clearance before allowing a return to play or a graded training program.**
- The cornerstones of medical management include rest until symptoms have resolved; cognitive testing to ensure recovery of brain function, and then a graded return to sport program with monitoring for recurrence of symptoms.
- In general, a more conservative approach (i.e. longer time to return to sport) is used in cases where there is any uncertainty about the player's recovery (***"if in doubt sit them out"***).
- Difficult cases, such as those involving prolonged symptoms or deficits in brain function, require a more detailed, multi-disciplinary approach to management.

A player with suspected concussion must be withdrawn from playing or training until medically evaluated and cleared.



**AFL Research Board
AFL Medical Officers Association**