

15. CONCUSSION POLICY

- 15.1** Country Football WA continues to prioritise the health and safety of all participants, and strongly encourages all leagues, clubs and teams to take a cautious approach to the management of concussion in Australian Rules Football.

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:

1. Recognising a suspected concussion.
2. Removing the player from the game.
3. Referring the player to a medical doctor for assessment.

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.

There must be an accredited first aider at every game and the basic rules of first aid should be used when dealing with any player who is unconscious or injured. **If in doubt, then sit them out.**

HEADCHECK CONCUSSION APP

The Headcheck Concussion App continues to help Trainers, Coaches and Parents/Guardians recognise the symptoms of a suspected concussion and its severity through a series of concise questions and observations to quickly identify whether a child's head injury requires an ambulance, hospital, or a GP visit.

The App also assists Parents/Guardians in managing their child's recovery program based on the symptoms displayed as well as guide the Parents/Guardians on their child's safe return to school, training, and games.

The Headcheck Concussion App can be downloaded for free on both Apple and Android devices. For more information about the app, please visit www.headcheck.com.au

MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR SUSPECTED CONCUSSION

1. Assess for presence of any concussion symptoms or signs (e.g., stunned, confusion, memory problems, balance problems, headache, dizziness, not feeling right).
2. Implement first aid management protocol, including cervical spine immobilisation.
3. Remove from the ground and assess using pocket CRT (Concussion Recognition Tool).
4. Presence of any factors for urgent hospital referral (e.g., confusion, vomiting, worsening headache).

<p>If yes – Call for an ambulance and refer to hospital. If no – Do not allow player to return to play. Refer to a medical doctor for assessment.</p>
<p>REPORTING AND RECORD KEEPING</p>
<p>All confirmed and suspected concussions are to be reported on PlayHQ as soon as possible but ideally no later than 9am on the Monday following a match.</p>
<p>RETURN TO TRAIN AND PLAY PROCEDURE</p>
<p>Country Football WA align to the national concussion guidelines released by the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). A minimum requirement for returning to full training and playing matches is outlined in these Concussion Guidelines as per the diagram on the following page. Players must follow the graded loading program and supply a medical certificate before returning to full training and playing games.</p>
<p>A more conservative approach should be adopted for any player who has had a history of concussion or if there is any reoccurrence of symptoms.</p> <p>The referenced 21 days is not a standard <i>wait and play</i>, it is the minimum requirement, and all concussions should be treated as unique and assessed independently with players following the graduated return to play process, and not be fixed on a set number of days to safely return.</p>
<p>MULTIPLE CONCUSSIONS IN A SEASON</p>
<p>Following any concussion, a player must receive a medical clearance to Return to Play as per the National Community Concussion Guidelines.</p> <p>If a player receives a second concussion in a season, then the player must be assessed by a doctor or medical practitioner who specialises in concussion management, and be medically cleared by them in order to Return to Training or Play.</p> <p>WA Football can assist clubs and families in identifying doctors who specialise in the field of concussion.</p>
<p>If a player receives a third concussion within a season (combined across any competition i.e., club, school, AFL9's, etc) then it is highly recommended, that the player does not play for the remainder of the season, and should continue to be assessed / monitored by a medical specialist in Concussion Management.</p>

There are a number of resources available to assist Clubs with the Management of Concussion, including:

- **WA Football Graded Return to Play Framework**
https://wafooty.com.au/open/d/AEbGeT1tIEU-msDRsvl0EL4mbH9_tryekyOMxZPEPwY
- **WA Football 'the role of helmets' poster**
<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn%3Aaaid%3Ascds%3AUS%3A5b798436-2745-32cb-ab3a-09417a75ea37&viewer%21megaVerb=group-discover>
- **WA Football 'Multiple concussions in a year' poster**
https://wafooty.com.au/open/d/Y6xyt6mUI456T-ula6aQX5EkvSNpVz_qw70mnyeoqzQ
- **AFL General Match Day Head Injury and Referral Form**
https://play.afl/sites/default/files/2023-10/matchdayheadinjury_form_final%20%281%29.pdf
- **AFL Concussion and Injury Management in Football Module for First Aiders**
<https://play.afl/concussion/resources/concussion-injury-management-module>

- **Concussion Recognition Tool**
<https://sma.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Concussion-Recognition-Tool-CRT6.pdf>
- **Return to Learn –**
https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1133471/RETURN-TO-LEARN.pdf
- **Concussion Education Course (15 minutes)**
WA Football and Country Football WA **strongly recommends** that all parents, coaches, volunteers and players undertake the online concussion education course.
<https://www.connectivity.org.au/courses/sport-related-concussion-course/>

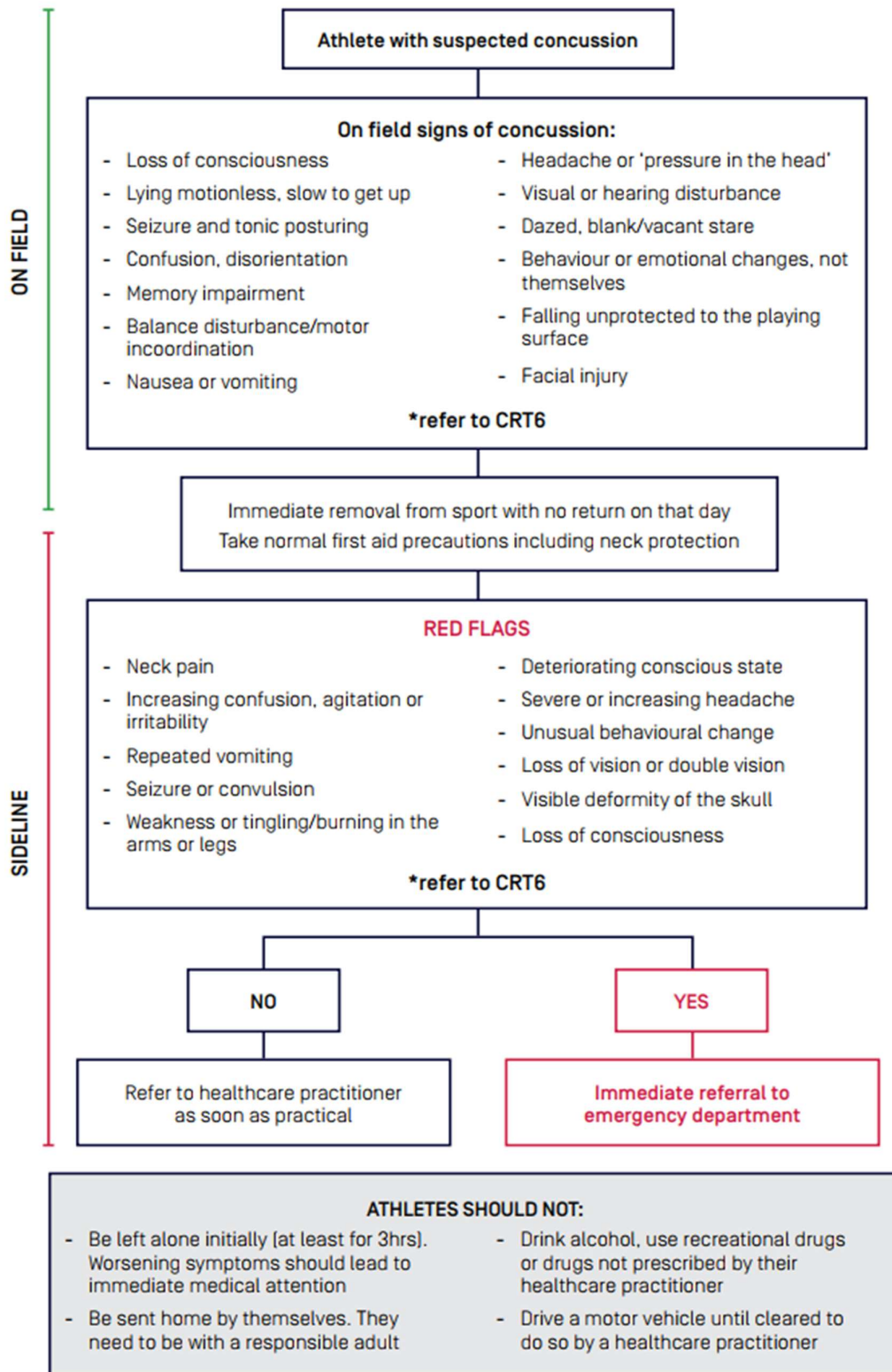
In relation to these protocols, a **Health Care Practitioner** (HCP) refers to a Specialist Sports Doctor / Physician, a General Practitioner (GP), or a AHPRA registered health care practitioner with appropriate training and experience in concussion assessment and management.

It is imperative that all clubs, volunteers, parents, coaches and players take a cautious approach to the management of a concussion, and that players work through each of the steps of a graduated return to play process.

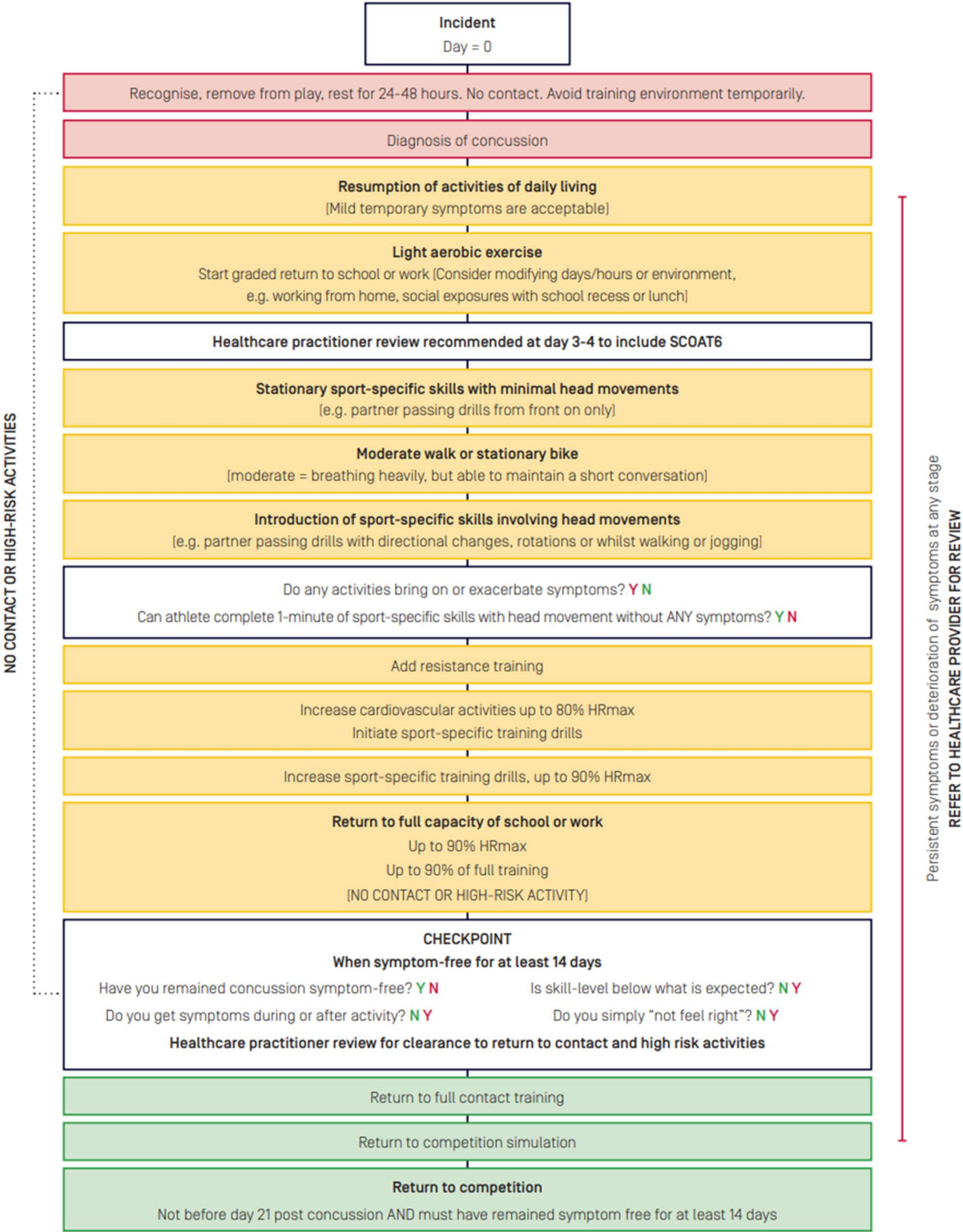
Under-reporting of concussions, or the downplaying of the symptoms of a concussion, has the potential to put the player at greater health risk.

“Everyone has a responsibility to report a suspected concussion”

Recognising a Suspected Concussion



Return to Play Protocols



Examples of return to sport timeframes

Note:

- > Day of concussive incident is considered 'Day 0'
- > Examples below assume a sport where competition occurs weekly on a Saturday
- > The 14 day symptom free period does not start until the first day that the athlete is symptom free

Key:

Incident
Symptomatic
Symptom-free
Contact training
Full competition

Athlete symptom-free on day 3 [Tuesday of the 1st week]				
Saturday	5. Saturday	12. Saturday	Saturday	Saturday
Sunday	6. Sunday	13. Sunday	Sunday	Sunday
Monday	7. Monday	14. Monday	Monday	Monday
1. Tuesday	8. Tuesday	Tuesday	Tuesday	Tuesday
2. Wednesday	9. Wednesday	Wednesday	Wednesday	Wednesday
3. Thursday	10. Thursday	Thursday	Thursday	Thursday
4. Friday	11. Friday	Friday	Friday	Friday

Athlete symptom-free on day 7 [Saturday of second week]				
Saturday	1. Saturday	8. Saturday	Saturday	Saturday
Sunday	2. Sunday	9. Sunday	Sunday	Sunday
Monday	3. Monday	10. Monday	Monday	Monday
Tuesday	4. Tuesday	11. Tuesday	Tuesday	Tuesday
Wednesday	5. Wednesday	12. Wednesday	Wednesday	Wednesday
Thursday	6. Thursday	13. Thursday	Thursday	Thursday
Friday	7. Friday	14. Friday	Friday	Friday