

# RJFC spinal and concussion injury management policy

## Background

The RJFC management of concussion and spinal injuries is based on the *Management of Concussion in Australian Football* guideline, which was developed by the AFL Concussion Working Group Scientific Committee. This guideline provides specific provisions for children aged 5-17 years.

**This guideline is effective from its introduction and will continue until further notice.**

## Spinal injuries

Symptoms of spinal injury include:

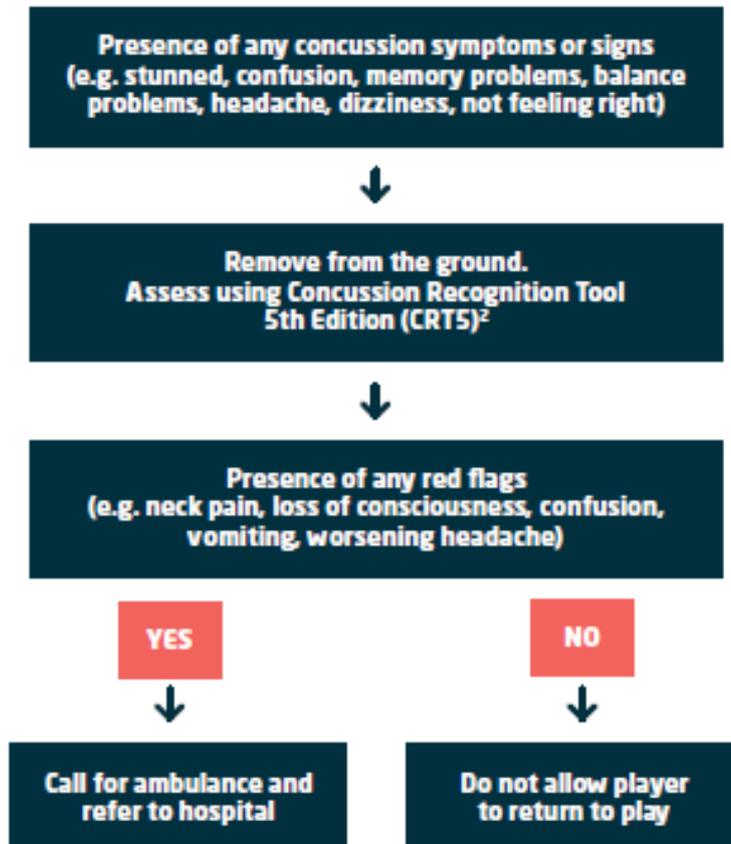
- Extreme back pain or pressure in your neck, head or back
- Weakness, incoordination or paralysis in any part of your body
- Numbness, tingling or loss of sensation in your hands, fingers, feet or toes
- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- Difficulty with balance and walking
- Impaired breathing after injury
- An oddly positioned or twisted neck or back

Overall, if there is any doubt about a suspected spinal injury, a player should not be moved, and an ambulance called and the player referred to hospital.

## Concussion injuries

### Concussion management

In the early stages of injury, it is often not clear whether an injury is a concussion or there is a more severe underlying structural head injury. For this reason, the most important steps in initial management include:



Adapted from 2017 AFL Community Concussion Guidelines

[http://www.aflcommunityclub.com.au/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Health\\_Fitness/2017\\_Community\\_Concussion\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.aflcommunityclub.com.au/fileadmin/user_upload/Health_Fitness/2017_Community_Concussion_Guidelines.pdf)

Note:

- If a player is assessed for signs of concussion and none are present and no other injuries are present, in consultation with the parent or guardian (and Medic if available), a player may be returned to play at the appropriate time
- If a player is unconscious, 000 must be contacted immediately
- Removing the player from the ground should only be done if safe to do so (ie no red flags for spinal injury)
- When a player displays any symptoms of concussion the trainer must recommend to the players' parents that they attend a medical doctor for assessment

#### [Returning to play after a concussion injury](#)

Any player who has suffered a concussion or is suspected of having a concussion **MUST NOT** be allowed to return to play in the same game/practice session. The player should not to return to training or competition until:

- he/she has successfully returned to school/learning and is symptom-free
- has parental consent (verbal or written) to do so

RJFC recommends parents and guardians consult a medical professional following any suspected concussion and follow medical advice prior to consenting for their child to return to training or match games.

#### [Moving an injured player](#)

If unconscious, or if there are signs or symptoms of spinal injury the player must not be moved until paramedics arrive with an ambulance.

If conscious and no symptoms or signs of a spinal injury, the player should be removed from the field and moved to a quiet place to allow the trainer or medic to assess the player properly.

#### [Helmets](#)

There is currently no evidence that helmets prevent concussion injuries thus the RJFC do not require the use of helmets for this purpose. Parents are free to make their own decisions on helmets.

**Policy endorsed: July 2018**

**Review date: July 2019**