

FERNTREE GULLY FOOTBALL CLUB



CONCUSSION POLICY

JANUARY 2014

PURPOSE:

To develop a *Ferntree Gully Football Club* position statement and guideline on the responsible approach to managing players who have suffered concussion in the course of play.

STATEMENT:

The *Ferntree Gully Football Club* takes very seriously the welfare of our players.

This document has been produced to provide players, parents and officials with basic information so that informed decisions can be made with respect to this very important topic. It is a guideline for the conservative management of concussion; and an educational and awareness raising approach.

It is important that medical attention is received where there has been an incident or a suspected incident of concussion.

DEFINITION – WHAT IS CONCUSSION?

Concussion is a traumatic brain injury (TBI) resulting from an impact to the head that may result in a bad headache, altered levels of alertness, or unconsciousness. It temporarily interferes with the way your brain works, and it can affect memory, judgment, reflexes, speech, balance, coordination, and sleep patterns.

A mild concussion may involve no loss of consciousness (feeling dazed) or a very brief loss of consciousness (being knocked out).

A severe concussion may involve prolonged loss of consciousness with a delayed return to normal.

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES, INCIDENCE, AND RISK FACTORS?

A concussion may result when the head hits an object or a moving object strikes the head. A concussion can result from a fall, sports activities, and car accidents. Significant movement of the brain (called jarring) in any direction can cause you to lose alertness (become unconscious). How long you remain unconscious may be a sign of the severity of the concussion. However, concussions don't always involve a loss of consciousness. Most people who have a concussion never black out. You can have a concussion and not realize it.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms of a concussion can range from mild to severe and **medical attention is strongly advised**. The symptoms can include:

- Altered level of consciousness (drowsy, hard to arouse, or similar changes)
- Confusion, feeling spacey, or not thinking straight
- Headache

- Loss of consciousness
- Memory loss (amnesia) of events before the injury or immediately after
- Nausea and vomiting
- Seeing flashing lights
- Feeling like you have "lost time"
- Changes in behaviour or unusual behaviour
- Changes in speech (slurred, difficult to understand, does not make sense)
- Confusion
- Difficulty waking up or becoming more sleepy
- Double vision or blurred vision
- Fever
- Fluid or blood leaking from the nose or ears
- Headache that is getting worse, lasts a long time, or does not get better with over-the-counter pain relievers
- Problems walking or talking
- Seizures
- Vomiting more than three times

The following are emergency symptoms of a concussion. **Seek immediate and urgent medical care** if there are:

- Changes in alertness and consciousness
- Convulsions (seizures)
- Muscle weakness on one or both sides
- Persistent confusion
- Persistent unconsciousness (coma)
- Repeated vomiting
- Unequal pupils
- Unusual eye movements
- Walking problems

Head injuries that result in concussion often are associated with injury to the neck and spine. Particular care should be taken when moving patients who have had a head injury.

While recovering from a concussion, a person may:

- Be withdrawn, easily upset, or confused
- Have a hard time with tasks that require remembering or concentrating
- Have mild headaches
- Be less tolerant of noise

PROGNOSIS:

Healing or recovering from a concussion takes time. It may take days, weeks, or even months. You may be irritable, have trouble concentrating, and be unable to remember things, have headaches, dizziness, and blurry vision. These problems will probably go away slowly. You may want to get help from family or friends before making important decisions.

COMPLICATIONS:

Complications from a concussion can include:

- Bleeding in the brain (intracerebral hemorrhage)
- Brain injury that results in physical, emotional, or intellectual changes

The *second impact syndrome* (SIS) is when a person gets a second concussion while still having symptoms from a first one. This raises the risk for brain swelling, which can be deadly.

AFL DOCUMENTS:

This Club generated document reflects the current AFL literature in relation to this important topic. AFL documents sourced are:

- Responsible approach to concussion in the AFL ó Information Paper
- Management of concussion in the AFL
- Concussion ó recommendations and management guidelines ó for players
- Concussion ó recommendations and management guidelines ó for parents
- Sports Trainers in Community AFL Policy

Copies of these documents are attached.

IN SUMMARY - GUIDEING PRINCIPLES ENDORSED BY THE CLUB – BASED ON AFL COMMUNITY LEVEL GUIDELINES:

- 1. Concussion must be taken extremely seriously to safeguard long term Player welfare.**
- 2. Players suspected of having concussion must be immediately removed from play and must not resume play in the match or at training.**
- 3. Players suspected of having concussion must be medically assessed.**
- 4. Players are not allowed to return to play or train until they have had formal medical clearance.**
- 5. Players suspected of having concussion or diagnosed with concussion must go through a graduated return to play (or train) program (GRTP).**
- 6. If there is any uncertainty, take a more conservative approach.**

GRADUATED RETURN TO PLAY (GRTP):

Where GRTP IS managed by a Medical Practitioner:

A Player (without the reoccurrence of any symptoms) would take approximately (1) one week to proceed through the full GRTP rehabilitation protocol.

Where GRTP is NOT managed by a Medical Practitioner:

A Player **MUST NOT** play until at least the 21st day after the incident.

The GRTP process may commence after a 14 day stand-down period from playing sport and/or training for sport and only if there are no symptoms of concussion.

If any symptoms occur while progressing through the GRTP protocol, the Player **MUST** return to the previous stage and attempt to progress again after a minimum 24-hour period of rest.

All players **MUST** complete the GRTP protocol, and **MUST** have clearance from a Medical Practitioner before they can return to play.

DECISION:

This document was discussed and endorsed at the January 2014 Committee Meeting; and will come into immediate effect.

OVERSIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY

The Club Head Trainer is responsible for the oversight and management of this Policy together with the decision associated with the GRTP.

**Ferntree Gully Football Club
Executive & General Committee
January 2014**