



## **Concussion Policy & Protocols to Return to Play**

The Independent Sporting Association administrates and convenes inter-school sporting activities in which many students from its member schools participate. Students participating in these sporting events take part in practice, trials and competitions.

While the ISA takes measures to make the sporting activities as safe as possible for participants, there is a risk that students can be injured as a result of their participation in these sporting activities, whether at training or in actual events.

The purpose of this document is to provide an evidence-based, best practice summary to assist ISA Members' staff and others (coaches, parents, officials, administrators, etc.) to recognise and manage sport related concussion.

The information in this policy is in line with the latest findings from the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Concussion in Sport, and the 2017 Concussion in Sport Group (CISG) consensus statement. Sources include the Australian Institute of Sport, Australian Medical Association, International Rugby Board, Rugby Australia and Sports Medicine Australia.

This Policy aims to protect the welfare and health of students and where in doubt regarding a student being concussed or suspected of concussion, to err on the side of caution.

'If in doubt, sit them out'.

No player who has been concussed or suspected of concussion will be allowed to return to ISA sport (training and fixtures) without having a medical clearance. In addition, the student is required to have progressed through the Graduated Return to Play Protocol listed below.

The Protocol to Return to Play aims to address both cognitive and physical rehabilitation and is a shared responsibility of parents, player, coaches, schools and medical practitioners.

### **Definition**

Sports Medicine Australia defines concussion as 'a disturbance in brain function rather than a structural injury to the brain. It is caused by a direct or indirect force to the head, face, neck or elsewhere which transmits an impulsive force to the head'.<sup>1</sup>

Concussion is a subset of mild traumatic brain injury that is at the less severe end of the brain injury spectrum. It is characterised by a graded set of neurological symptoms and signs that typically arise rapidly and resolve spontaneously over a sequential course. The process of recovery, however, varies from person to person and injury to injury.

### **Specific Information re Concussion:**

- any suspicion of concussion requires immediate removal from sport;
- children should not return to sport until cleared by a medical practitioner;
- a child's brain can take longer to recover than that of an adult brain;
- you do not necessarily need a knock to the head to sustain a concussion; and
- concussion is an evolving injury and anyone with suspected concussion should be monitored.

### **Medical Practitioner:**

To date, there is no specific medical test, such as a blood test or medical imaging, that assists in the diagnosis of uncomplicated concussion. The ISA Concussion Protocol ensures that parents and players are referred to a medical practitioner for assessment. It is recommended that schools/parents source a medical practitioner with some experience in the management of concussion.

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<sup>1</sup> SMA Concussion in Sport Policy V1.0 January 2018

