



## CONCUSSION PROTOCOLS

At St Albans Football and Netball Club (STAFNC), we are committed to the health, safety, and wellbeing of all our players.

The AFL and AFL Barwon's updated 2026 Concussion Protocols and concussion guidelines for both football and netball are **fully adopted and supported** by St Albans Football and Netball Club.

Important messages we would like to share about concussion:

- Concussion is a brain injury. It can happen when players get a head knock, a bump or an impact to the body that sends force to the head.
- You don't need to be knocked out to have a concussion. A suspected concussion is a head knock or impact to the body that sends force to the head plus signs or symptoms afterwards.
- Concussion signs and symptoms are not always obvious.  
**The key: If in doubt, sit it out.**
- Recovery is crucial and is different for everyone. The brain needs time to heal.

We encourage all St Albans players, coaches, officials and families to familiarise themselves with these concussion protocols and STAFNC management guidelines to prioritise player welfare at all times.

Protocols can be found here:

**AFL** - <https://play.afl/concussion>

**Netball** - <https://netball.com.au/news/update-netball-australias-concussion-protocols>

**Additional resources:**

[HeadCheck App](#)

[Pocket Recognition Tool](#)

[Child - CRT6](#)

[Adult - SCAT6](#)



## CONCUSSION PROTOCOLS

To highlight the key updates from the AFL Concussion Protocols:

- All Australian rules football competitions across all age groups including **all community football competitions** must follow a **mandatory minimum 21-day return to play protocol** following a concussion.
- Under these community guidelines, the **earliest** a player can return to play after sustaining a concussion is **21 days from the date of injury**, provided they have safely progressed through every stage of the return to play program.

St Albans Football and Netball Club **adopts** the following in line with AFL Barwon:

- Full alignment with the **2026 AFL Concussion Protocol** across all age levels, competitions and codes.
- The policy also applies to **Netball competitions**, in alignment with Netball Victoria, Netball Australia and AFL Barwon.
- These protocols apply to **practice matches, interleague games, and any other form of match or competition** in football or netball.
- Any player that opts to wear a helmet must meet the Australian Football Headgear Standards.

### *Return to Play Protocols*

The most important aspect of return to play protocols is guiding the player through **key stages** rather than simply following suggested timeframes or the number of days post injury.

The critical stages for return to play following concussion include:

1

A **brief** period of **relative rest** (24-48 hours),

3

A **graded loading program** (with medical clearance required before full contact training),

2

A period of **recovery**,

4

Unrestricted return to play



# STAFNC CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

## STAFNC game day / training - initial management of concussion

1. **Recognise** that a player may have suffered a concussion or injury to their brain; provide first aid.
2. **Remove** the player from the match/training and monitor the player for deteriorating symptoms. *Can use the Concussion Recognition Tool or HeadCheck App to confirm symptoms.*
3. **Refer** the player to a medical doctor for assessment.  
> > For urgent cases or where the players symptoms have worsened, an ambulance should be called.
4. **Document** the injury through the following channels:

### For Football:

A suspected concussion can be entered into PlayHQ by:

- a) Team Manager or Club admins
- b) League admin and above

- A suspected concussion can be entered in relation to a match or training incident, i.e. a game or non-game incident.
- When a suspected concussion is recorded, a player is automatically ineligible for upcoming games and cannot be selected in line-ups.
- The participant/profile owner will be notified of the suspected concussion via email, and provided details on the process they must follow to safely return to play following a suspected concussion.
- A return to play declaration form is required for a return to play.

If you are a parent who suspects their child has had a concussion, please notify your child's team manager.

### For Netball:

Use the Concussion referral and clearance report form, found [here](#):



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## STAFNC follow up management

Where there is any **suspicion of concussion**, the player requires further evaluation and assessment of symptoms **by a medical professional**.

*Where appropriate, a player's evaluation may include video footage, assessment of their orientation, balance and cognitive function through the SCAT5 to assist in completing the injury report.*

In **every case**, the decision regarding the timing of return to training will be made by a medical doctor with experience in managing concussion and in accordance with the current AFL and Netball policies regarding concussion management.

In alignment with policy, STAFNC players **will not** return to play for a minimum period of **21 days from the date of injury**. Players will move through the return to play steps.

If a player plays both netball and football across STAFNC or through another club, it is the player/parent/ team managers responsibility to notify each code. You **cannot** be subject to concussion protocols for football, but play netball and vice versa.

If a **medical practitioner** determines based on their assessment that a player *did not* have a concussion, then with medical clearance and documentation that is sighted/stored by STAFNC, this player can return.

## Support

St Albans Football and Netball Club's medical team can assist in coordinating players to attend medical professionals for assessment and review of concussion, as well as provide support and guidance on the players return to play schedule.



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