



**FOOTBALL
AUSTRALIA**

COMMUNITY SPORTS RELATED CONCUSSION GUIDELINES

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

**ADULT GRADED
RETURN TO PLAY PROGRAM**

"IF IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT."

Each stage should be at least 24 hours and any exacerbation of symptoms should be mild only and return to baseline prior to commencing the next activity or stage.

The timeframes specified for progression through each Return to Play step outlined are a guide and are dependent on individual variability in a player's symptomatic response to a SRC episode. Symptoms may dictate a slower graded return.

Importantly, for a community footballer, there must be a minimum of 14 days symptom-free at rest before a return to full contact training and a minimum 21 days from the SRC event before a return to competitive match play on the basis that the player was symptom-free at rest for a minimum of 14 days.

RETURN TO PLAY STEPS	TIMELINE FOLLOWING SRC	STEPS TO FOLLOW	EXAMPLES OF EACH STEP
Step 1 <i>Relative Rest & Recovery</i>	24 - 48 hours	Relative physical and cognitive rest.	Minimise physical activity and screen time for a minimum 24 hours following the injury.
Step 2 <i>Resume daily living</i>	24 – 48 hours	Resumption of activities of daily living with only mild temporary symptoms present.	Daily tasks involving short duration and low demand activities. Resume screen time in moderation.
Step 3 <i>Light exercise</i>	48 – 72 hours	Resume light aerobic exercise and avoid resistance exercise or activities requiring head movement. Exercise with low heart rate, breathing frequency and minimal effort.	Walking, swimming or stationary cycling with a low heart rate, breathing frequency and minimal effort or exertion.
Step 4 <i>Moderate exercise</i>	4 – 5 days	Increase to moderate aerobic exercise. Include stationary sport-specific drills with minimal head movements.	Walking, swimming or stationary cycling with a moderate heart rate, increased breathing frequency and some effort or exertion. Sports-specific skills with minimal movement or head movements.
Step 5 <i>Running & Sports-specific drills</i>	5 – 7 days	Commence running drills or straight-line overground running. Avoid all head impact activities. Commence sport-specific drills with head movement.	Straight-line running and running drills. Sport-specific running drills without contact or head impact.

Step 6 <i>Sports-specific training without contact</i>	7 – 14 days	Increase intensity and duration of running drills. Increased aerobic exercise intensity. Progression to more complex training drills, e.g., passing drills. Commence progressive resistance training.	Non-contact running with side to side movement. Sports-specific movement drills without collision or contact.
Step 7 <i>Resume full training</i>	14 - 21 days	Participate in normal and full contact training activities.	Full training, although monitor extent and type of contact.
Step 8 <i>Return To Competition</i>	21 days	Return to competition a minimum 21 days from the SRC event in addition to a minimum 14-day symptom-free at rest.	Full unrestricted training before a return to competitive matches.

Exemptions to the above time frames are strictly restricted to players aged 19 years and above when there is access to an Advanced Health Care Setting that includes sideline medical care at training and matches, and consideration has been given to preseason concussion baseline testing and there is ready access to a Club Doctor. This could include some semi-professional football clubs (e.g., NPL) that provide the satisfactory medical care as specified. Further specifics regarding Advanced Health Care Settings and the Graded Return to Play Program are available [here](#).

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This Quick Reference Guide should be considered in conjunction with Football Australia’s Community Sports Related Concussion Guidelines. These guidelines are intended to assist in the management of sports related concussion and do not replace the need to seek medical assessment. This information should not be interpreted as a guideline for clinical practice or legal standard of care.

