



## Concussion Policy

<b>Title</b>	Concussion Policy	<b>Policy No</b>	PN-0029
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### Definition

The word 'participant' means – participant, drummer, sweep, coach or volunteer and race official

### Introduction

The purpose of this Policy is to help guide the management of anyone who may have a suspected concussion because of their participation in Dragon Boating activities. This document sets out the guiding principles and provides general advice regarding the management of concussion for the dragon boat community in Australia.

Concussion is a traumatic brain injury caused by a direct blow to the head or by the indirect transmission of force to the brain from a blow to another part of the body. While concussion will resolve with time and rest it needs to be recognised and treated as soon as possible.

Concussion can occur from minor knocks and often without loss of consciousness with symptoms and signs that are variable, non-specific and may be subtle. Symptoms may take several hours to develop and can be delayed in onset for up to 48 hrs after the injury. Children under 18 years are more at risk of concussion and take longer to recover than adults and also require a more conservative approach to diagnosis and management including a longer recovery period.

While concussion is uncommon in dragon boating, they have occurred during collisions and capsizes. Participants are also at risk from slips, falls and collisions on land or on docks and pontoons.

All participants and parents should be alert to the possibility of concussion following any incident which causes a knock to the head or a forceful blow to the body. They should be on the look-out for symptoms and signs suggestive of concussion and be aware of how it should be managed which should be done according to First Aid principals for head and neck injury.

If concussion is suspected, the injured person must be referred for an urgent medical assessment and cannot return to competition or training until they have either been cleared or, once diagnosed with concussion, have completely recovered.

If there are any symptoms or signs suggestive of a more serious head or neck injury called **Red Flags** (see below) the injured person should be urgently transferred to the nearest **emergency department by ambulance. (Call 000)**

## The Six 'R' Management Plan

Use the following steps when managing suspected concussion.

### Step 1 - Recognise

Concussion should be suspected if a participant has any of these signs or symptoms or fails to answer any of the memory questions after a head or body collision. The onset of symptoms may be delayed for several hours after the initial injury so the participant should be observed for at least four hours.

Signs (what others may observe)	Symptoms (participant may report)	Memory (questions to ask)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss of Consciousness, observed lack of protective action taken during a fall</li><li>• Impact seizure (fit)</li><li>• Confusion, disorientation, not aware of what is happening around them</li><li>• Dazed, blank or vacant look</li><li>• Slow to get up</li><li>• Unsteady on feet , balance problems, incoordination</li><li>• Grabbing or clutching of head</li><li>• Behaviour change, more emotional or irritable</li><li>• Memory impairment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headache</li><li>• Dizziness</li><li>• Visual problems, blurred vision, light sensitivity</li><li>• Nausea or vomiting</li><li>• Neck pain (see <b>Red Flags</b>)</li><li>• Difficulty concentrating</li><li>• Difficulty remembering</li><li>• Pressure in head</li><li>• Sensitivity to noise</li><li>• Balance problems</li><li>• Mental clouding, confusion 'not feeling right',</li><li>• Drowsiness, like being 'in a fog', feeling slowed down</li><li>• Feeling more emotional, anxious or nervous than usual,</li><li>• Difficulty falling asleep</li><li>• Fatigue, low energy</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What venue are we at today?</li><li>• What race were you just in?</li><li>• What seat were you sitting in the last race?</li><li>• Did you drum or steer the last race?</li></ul>

### Red Flags

**Red Flags require urgent referral to nearest Emergency Department. These symptoms and signs are not always apparent when the person is first assessed and may take some time to develop after the incident.**

- Deteriorating consciousness
- Increasing confusion, agitation or irritability
- Weakness, numbness, tingling or burning in arms or legs
- Severe or increasing headache
- Repeated vomiting
- Unusual or uncharacteristic behaviour
- Seizure or convulsion (fitting)
- Double vision
- Neck pain.

### Step 2 - Remove

Any participant with suspected concussion **must** be removed from the competition or training immediately.

- The participant **must not** take further part in any training or games (including other sports) on this day.
- Any participant with a head injury **may also** have a cervical spine injury, especially if they lost consciousness during the incident. Symptoms include neck pain and tingling or weakness in arms or legs. **Once removed from danger the injured person must not be moved and their head and neck supported until medical help arrives.**

<p align="center"><b>RECOGNISE AND REMOVE IF IN DOUBT, SIT THEM OUT</b></p>
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### Step 3 – Refer

All participants with suspected or recognised concussion **must** be referred to a **medical doctor** or **emergency department** as soon as possible for a comprehensive assessment.

- This referral should happen on the same day as the incident even if symptoms or signs have disappeared.
- The participant **must at all times**:
  - remain in the care of a responsible adult who can monitor for any deterioration
  - not consume alcohol
  - not drive a motor vehicle
  - avoid aspirin, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications, sleeping tablets or sedating pain medications

**If any of the Red Flags, suggestive of more severe head or cervical spine injury, are present, the participant must be taken to the nearest hospital Emergency Department by ambulance as soon as possible. Call emergency ambulance (000):**

### Step 4 – Rest

<p>Rest is the cornerstone of concussion management. The participant should rest completely until all symptoms and signs of concussion have disappeared</p>
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#### Complete Rest:

- Rest quietly at home until symptoms and signs have settled.
- Rest the Brain. Limit tasks requiring memory or concentration.
- Avoid TV, use of mobile devices, electronic games, computers and phones.
- The doctor who has assessed the injury will specify the minimum time of complete rest.
- The period of complete rest depends on the severity of the concussion and can vary from person to person.
- **Adults should rest for a minimum of 24 hours.**
- **Juniors (18U) will need a longer complete rest period**

## Step 5 – Recover

- Having rested for 24-48 hours after sustaining a concussion, it is usually possible to return to light physical activity including activities of daily living for short periods providing this does not cause a significant or sustained deterioration in symptoms. It is then possible to gradually resume school, study or work, whilst monitoring for recurring symptoms.
- The participant must not perform any strenuous exercise or any organised sport until their symptoms have completely resolved and are no longer exacerbated by activities of daily living including light physical activity.
- If any symptoms recur during recovery, the participant will need more complete rest time and they should be reviewed by their medical doctor.
- The majority of concussive symptoms should resolve within 10-14 days of the injury

## Step 6 – Return

- Exercise **can only** resume once a participant has returned to **activities of normal daily living** without signs or symptoms of concussion and does **not require medication** for their symptoms.
- The best way to return to sport is to follow a gradual re-introduction of exercise in a stepwise progression known as a graduated return to play programme (**GRTP**). A minimum of 24 hrs should be spent at each level and the participant should only step up to the next level of activity if no concussive symptoms recur.

Stage	Exercise Mode	Example of Exercise Activity	Progression
1	Rest	Complete rest of the brain and body	Medical doctor decides on amount of time needed
2	Light cardiovascular exercise	Light jogging for 10-15 minutes, swimming or cycling at low level to moderate intensity. No weight training	If no symptoms, start Stage 3 after a minimum of 24 hours. If symptoms occur, rest 24 hours & repeat Stage 2
3	Dragon Boat specific exercise	Individual dragon boat drills without contact. No weight training	If no symptoms, start Stage 4 after a minimum of 24 hours. If symptoms occur, rest 24 hours & repeat Stage 3
4	Dragon Boat specific training	Participate in a low intensity training session. Return to light weight training	If no symptoms, start Stage 5 after a minimum of 24 hours. If symptoms occur, rest 24 hours & repeat Stage 4
5	Dragon Boat specific training	Participate in full training session, following a medical clearance certificate being provided to the club	Participant, coach or parent to report any symptoms to medical doctor. If symptoms occur, then medical doctor to review
6	Dragon Boat regatta	Return to full competition	Monitor for recurring symptoms or signs

## In Summary

Concussion is a traumatic brain injury which results in a disturbance of brain function

- All concussions should be considered serious
- Concussion is caused by biomechanical force to the head or anywhere else in the body which transmits a force to the head
- Most concussions occur *without* the participant being “knocked out” i.e. losing consciousness, however, if a participant is “knocked out”, they will be concussed
- Juniors (18U) require very careful assessment and more cautious treatment of concussion. They are more susceptible to concussion and experience a longer recovery time than adults
- Symptoms usually develop quickly, often within 1-2 hours of injury however sometimes there is a delay of up to 24-48 hours before symptoms become apparent.
- A participant with suspected or confirmed concussion must not be allowed to continue with competition or training on the day of injury and should not return to any sporting activity until they have completely recovered
- Anyone with suspected concussion should be seen by a suitably qualified Medical Practitioner as soon as possible for a comprehensive assessment
- It is important to be aware of **Red Flag** symptoms and signs as these indicate a more serious underlying head injury which could prove fatal if unrecognised and untreated
- Recovery from concussion usually takes 10-14 days and requires both physical and mental rest. Return to paddling should be postponed until a participant has completely recovered
- Medical review is recommended whenever a participant has persisting symptoms or recovery is delayed beyond the expected time frame

## References

Sports Medicine Australia – Concussion in Sport Australia Position Statement

Water Polo Australia Concussion Guidance