

SLSQ Guideline

Title: Concussion Guideline	Department: Club Services - Lifesaving
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Introduction

A concussion is a type of concussion which may have tragic consequences. Our activities as an organisation that may involve a concussion, but are not limited to, dumping waves, boards, skis, IRBs, jet skis, surf boats, and beach events, such as flags and sprints. Concussions can and do occur. It is important that all SLSQ members be aware of this guideline and the information contained within, to minimize the impact of a concussion.

This guideline is based on the Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport 2016 (1), the Concussion in Sport Australia position statement (2), as well as the Rugby Australia Concussion procedure (3).

Purpose

A concussion may be very difficult to detect, and symptoms and signs can be varied, non-specific, and subtle. The following guidelines may help to manage someone who you suspect or indeed has a concussion.

Application

This guideline is considered a Surf Life Saving Queensland (SLSQ) Guideline for the purpose of SLSQ's Code of Conduct. It is expected that SLSQ members will put the safety of themselves and others ahead of other priorities. Intentional or reckless disregard for this may be cause for consideration of disciplinary action pursuant to SLSQ's Code of Conduct.

Definitions

A concussion may be a traumatic brain injury caused when impulsive forces are transmitted to the head. It can be caused by a direct blow to the head or indirectly when other parts of the body are injured. A concussion may result in short lived neurological (brain) impairment that should resolve with rest and a gradual return to activity. More information is available for SLSQ members, athletes, coaches, parents, and health professionals at www.concussioninsport.gov.au.

Underlying Principles

A concussion can have a significant impact on members experiencing them.

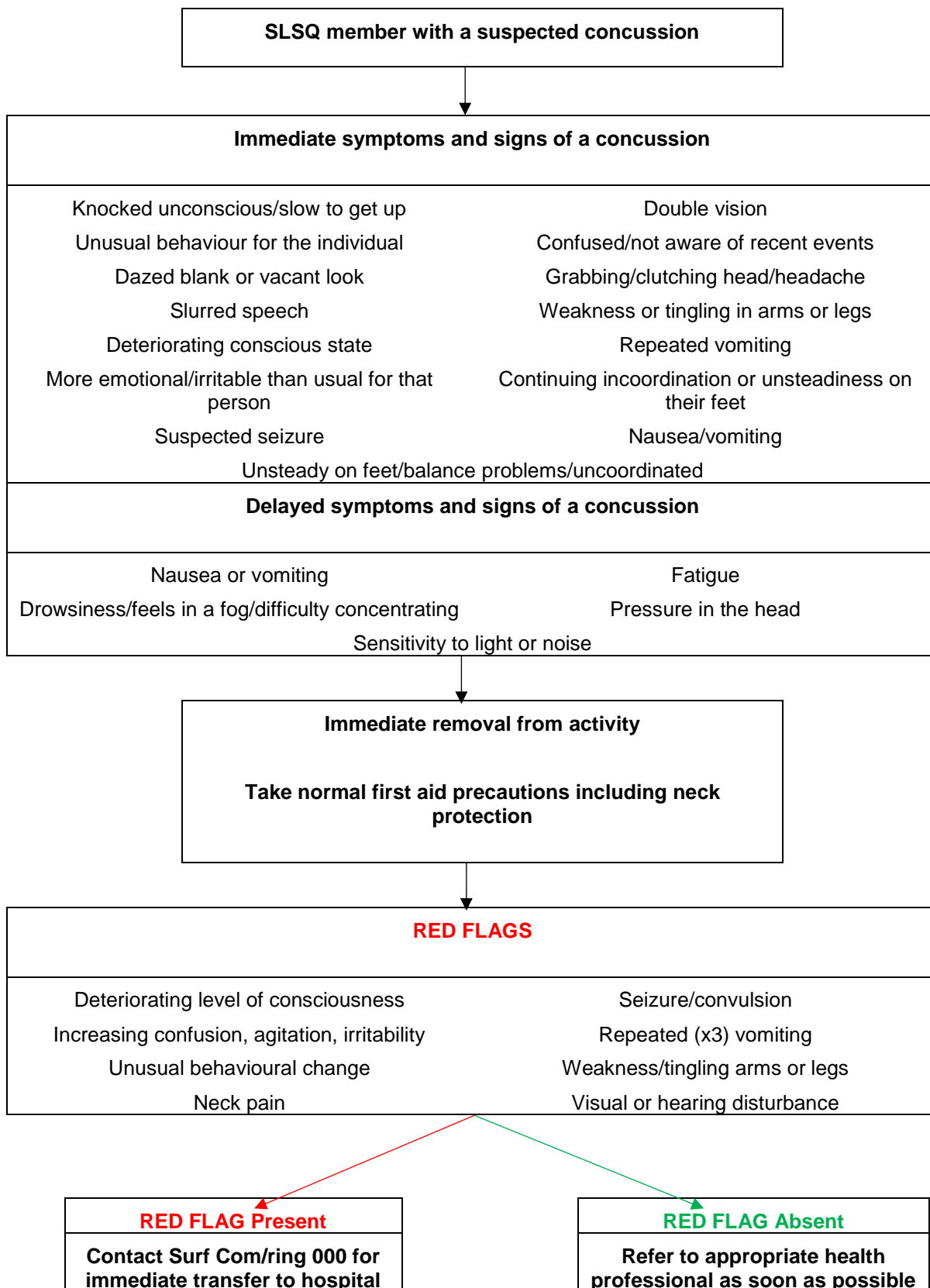
The combination of a concussion and the waterway (i.e., oceans, rivers, dams) is potentially fatal.

Any SLSQ member occurring a concussion MUST be removed from patrol, training, competition, or other activities for 24-48 hours (please refer to Figure 1).

If a SLSQ member experiences a concussion, a gradual return to patrolling, training, and competitive activities should be supported under the guidance of an appropriate expert health professional (please refer to Figure 2).

However, the member should be monitored for development of the symptoms and signs outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1. SLSQ concussion protocol. Adapted from SportAus (4).



Steps 1-6 are to be followed if a member experiences a concussion:

Step 1 Recognise (Refer to Figure 1)

The most important factor in the recognition of potential concussion in SLSQ members is that a concussion can occur without loss of consciousness or obvious neurological signs. A concussion must be suspected if a member has ANY of the above symptoms or signs after a suspected or witnessed head collision (Refer to Figure 1).

Step 2 Remove (Refer to Figure 1)

Any member with symptoms or signs of a potential concussion must be removed from the patrol, carnival, or other activity immediately. There must not be further participation for 24-48 hours from when the concussion occurred.

Members suffering head injuries in the water, on the beach, or with the use of any type of watercraft (for example, rescue boards, skis, IRB, surf boats) are at high risk of neck injury. Assessment by appropriately trained SLSQ members Safety and Emergency Management Coordinator or qualified health professionals is mandatory if a neck injury is suspected.

Step 3 Record

The details of the member, the incident, and the symptoms and signs should be entered into LIMSOC. If the injury occurred during a SLSQ event or patrol, a hardcopy Incident Form must be completed and lodged with SLSQ for Workers Compensation purposes.

Step 4 Refer

All members with a potential concussion must be referred to a medical professional within 72 hours of the injury. Members requiring immediate medical attention (see Red Flags in Figure 1) or with suspected neck injuries, should be referred to Queensland Ambulance Service, preferentially via Surf Com or by ringing (000).

The member at all times must:

- Be in the care of a responsible adult,
- Not drive a motor vehicle,
- Avoid alcohol consumption, and
- Provide accurate and complete information to the health professional.

SLSQ members must attend a registered health professional with the appropriate expertise to assess for signs of concussion and advise SLSQ when the member can return to activities within SLSQ. Written approval for the member to return must be provided by the appropriate health professional. This can include General Practitioners, Sports Physicians, and Occupational Therapists. It is expected that SLSQ members follow the advice of these expert health professionals.

Step 5 Rest

Rest is crucial to the recovery from a concussion. Members must rest completely for a minimum of 24 hours after the injury. Children 18 years or under are not to return to contact/collision activities before 14 days from complete resolution of all concussion symptoms.

Rest involves reducing physical and mental activity to a level that allows symptoms to settle. It may include:

- Resting quietly at home
- Missing a day or two of work, school, or study
- Limiting any tasks that require prolonged focus or concentration
- Avoiding excessive TV, mobile phones, gaming etc as these can aggravate symptoms

This rest should continue until symptoms have resolved without further need for medications.

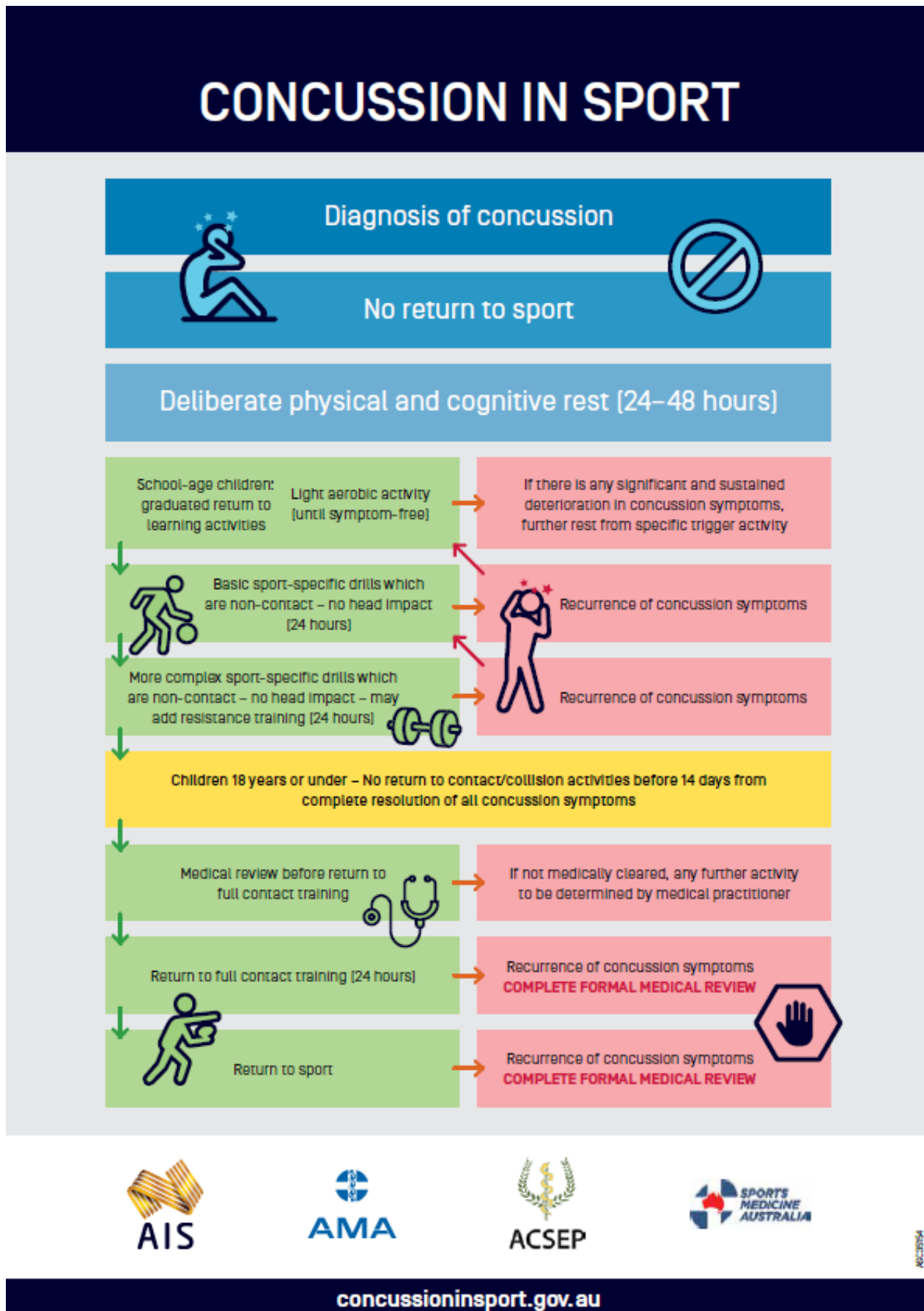
Step 6 Recovery and Return (refer to Figure 2)

Figure 2 shows concussions require the following stepwise criteria which can be seen below. The Figure is taken directly from SportAus which can be found on the following link <https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/athlete>.

A return to normal activities of daily living (not hard exercise) without ongoing requirement for medication for symptom control. A graduated return to exercise provided there is no return of symptoms or requirement for medication for symptom control.

A return to SLSQ activities, events, and training will occur once the member has returned to their pre-injury activity levels, remains symptom free without medications, AND the expert health professional has provided approval for that return. SLSQ requires a copy of written approval by the member.

Figure 2. SLSQ support SportAus return to activities protocol for a concussion (4).



References

1. McCrory P, Meeuwisse W, Dvorak J, Aubry M, Bailes J, Broglio S, et al. Consensus statement on concussion in sport-the 5(th) international conference on concussion in sport held in Berlin, October 2016. Br J Sports Med. 2017;51(11):838-47.
2. Elkington L, Manzanero S, Hughes D. Concussion in Sport Australia: Position Statement. In: Australia CiS, editor. Canberra: Sport Australia; 2019.
3. Rugby Australia. Concussion Procedure. Sydney; 2021.
4. SportAUS. Link: <https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/athlete>