



## **POLICY – CONCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

Concussions most commonly occur in organised contact sports such as football, wrestling, and soccer, but they can also occur in synchronised swimming. Because concussions can lead to serious health consequences, it is essential that synchronised swimmers, coaches, parents, officials and volunteers learn the signs and symptoms of concussion and what to do if a concussion occurs.

For the most relevant and up to date information please refer to [www.concussionin-sport.gov.au](http://www.concussionin-sport.gov.au) from the AIS website.

### **Suspect a concussion**

If the synchronised swimmer loses consciousness following an impact to the head or body, immediately remove the athlete from the pool and inform the lifeguards. Conduct appropriate emergency procedures.

If there is no loss of consciousness, and a concussion is suspected, immediately remove the athlete from the pool. Remove cap and goggles. Go through the symptom list noted.

- > Headache (differentiate between headache and pain at the impact site)
- > Nausea
- > Dizziness
- > Confusion
- > Light and noise sensitivity
- > Balance problems
- > Feeling “not right”

Any athlete who experiences a concussion (with or without loss of consciousness) should immediately be withheld from synchronised swimming and any related training. The athlete must be evaluated by a licensed health professional trained in concussion diagnosis and management.

If the athlete does not display concussion-related symptoms, please ask the athlete to remain poolside and continue to monitor the athlete every 10-15 minutes as symptoms can occur over time. If the athlete has no symptoms at the end of the training session, inform the parent/guardian that an impact has occurred and advise them to continue monitoring the athlete for symptoms at home for the next 24 hours. If symptoms develop, the athlete should be evaluated by a licensed health professional trained in concussion management.

## Returning to synchronised swimming

The return to synchronised swimming and progression to full activity is to be led by a health care provider who is trained and experienced in concussion management.

It is highly recommended that the physician can directly communicate with the coach in directing return to sport and providing step-by-step guidance.

To facilitate this communication, SynchroWA recommends that athletes and parents give the physician supervising the care of the patient written or verbal consent to communicate with the relevant coaching staff and club officials as required.

Once the athlete's symptoms have resolved to baseline with daily activity, the athlete should follow a stepped return to synchronised swimming according to protocol.

Medical clearance in the form of a medical certificate signed by a physician is required to progress from through the stages of return (see below).

Within each stage, activity is introduced and increased gradually. The athlete should be symptom-free for 24 hours before progressing to the next stage.

If at any stage the athlete experiences a recurrence of symptoms of concussion, the athlete needs to return to the previous level of activity until the symptoms resolve and should not try to progress for at least 24 hours.

Each step may take a minimum of one day, depending on the duration or recurrence of symptoms.

Athletes will progress through the following stages at differing rates. Communication between the coaching staff and the healthcare provider(s) in charge of the athlete's care is important and should be emphasised.

Stage	Home Activity	Physical Activity
No activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rest quietly, nap and sleep as much as needed.</li> <li>• Avoid bright light if bothersome.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids and eat healthy foods every 3-4 hours.</li> <li>• Avoid "screen time" (text, computer, cell phone, TV, video games).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking short distances to get around is acceptable.</li> <li>• Passive flexibility and breathing exercises are acceptable but do not hold breath for more than 10 seconds.</li> <li>• No exercise of any kind that increases heart rate.</li> <li>• No driving.</li> </ul>

Stage	Home Activity	Physical Activity
Light aerobic exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow 8-10 hours of sleep per night.</li> <li>• Avoid napping.</li> <li>• Drink lots of fluids and eat healthy foods every 3-4 hours.</li> <li>• "Screen time" less than 1 hour a day.</li> <li>• Spend limited social time with friends outside of school.</li> <li>• Avoid bright light and loud noise.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light physical activity, like walking, biking, kick with kickboard - but stop if neck hurts.</li> <li>• Limit water time.</li> <li>• No inversions or breath holds more than 10 seconds.</li> <li>• Aerobic Activity up to 70% Max Heart Rate.</li> <li>• No resistance training.</li> <li>• Continue passive flexibility.</li> <li>• Add active flexibility and extension exercises.</li> <li>• Light core strengthening (i.e. plank).</li> <li>• Wear sunglasses and ear plugs to practice.</li> <li>• No memorisation of routines.</li> <li>• Avoid sharp, rapid head movement.</li> </ul>
Sport specific exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow 8-10 hours of sleep per night. Avoid napping.</li> <li>• Drink lots of fluids and eat healthy foods every 3-4 hours.</li> <li>• "Screen time" less than 1 hour a day.</li> <li>• Spend limited social time with friends outside of school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradually increase aerobic activity -allow some head movement.</li> <li>• Jogging.</li> <li>• Swimming all strokes (no flip-turn).</li> <li>• Re-introduce synchro specific drills (no inversions).</li> <li>• Horizontal sculling.</li> <li>• Ballet Legs.</li> <li>• Eggbeater and body boosts.</li> <li>• Land-drill.</li> <li>• No pattern.</li> <li>• No resistance training or high impact cardio.</li> <li>• Continue flexibility and extension exercises.</li> </ul>

Stage	Home Activity	Physical Activity
No-contact drills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow 8-10 hours of sleep per night.</li> <li>• Avoid napping.</li> <li>• Drink lots of fluids and eat healthy foods every 3-4 hours.</li> <li>• "Screen time" less than 1 hour a day.</li> <li>• Spend limited social time with friends outside of school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase physical and cognitive load.</li> <li>• Resume full dry land training including resistance training.</li> <li>• Re-introduce inverted skills and whole-body movements.</li> <li>• Technical drills, gradually increasing intensity - Figure parts - Routine sections - Flip turns.</li> <li>• Remain out of the pattern.</li> <li>• Re-introduce full light and sound stimulation at the pool.</li> </ul>
Full contact practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase electronics use (avoid screens for at least 1 hour before bed).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resume normal training activity—full practice participation.</li> <li>• Gradually re-introduce athlete into the pattern.</li> <li>• Start with small sections at a time and build up to big parts.</li> </ul>
Return to sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase electronics use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full practice and competition participation.</li> </ul>

## Following a concussion

An athlete may work with several licensed healthcare providers who will assist in the athlete's recovery including:

- Sports medicine physicians;
- General practitioners;
- Physiotherapists;
- Neuropsychologists;
- Psychiatrists; and/or
- Osteopaths.