

Concussion refers to a disturbance in brain function caused by a direct or indirect force to the head. The effect concussion can have on a participant will vary from person to person, and injury to injury. Usually the changes are temporary, and the majority of participants recover completely if managed correctly. Concussion is a relatively common injury in many sports and recreational activities.

Olympic weightlifting is a non-contact sport, however, holding a weight overhead means that athletes are at risk of injury. Concussion can be sustained during accidental or unexpected impact to the head or from an unexpected impact to the body which causes a rapid change of direction to the head and neck. The size of the impact or where the impact occurs are not reliable predictors of the likelihood or severity of concussion. Unexpected impact that is difficult to brace for may cause injury, regardless of the size of impact.

The purpose of this Concussion Policy document is to outline the standards and guidelines involved in the management of concussion in the sport of Olympic Weightlifting in NSW.

### Concussion Recognition and Management

By utilising the 5 R's we can ensure that the health and wellbeing of participants remains the number one priority.

These include:

- Recognise
- Remove
- Refer
- Rest
- Return to play

### Recognising the injury

Any one or more of the following can indicate a possible concussion:

- Loss of consciousness
- Dazed, blank or vacant look
- Headache, blurred vision, dizziness
- Confused/not aware of events
- Balance problems (unsteadiness)
- Lying motionless on ground/slow to get up
- Grabbing or clutching head

Refer to the Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool to help identify concussion. It is important to note that brief evaluation tools are designed to recognise a concussion, but they cannot replace a comprehensive medical assessment.

### Removing the participants from the competition

Initial management must adhere to the first aid rules, including airway, breathing, circulation and spinal immobilisation. Any participant with a suspected concussion must be removed from the competition or activity. Removing the participant allows the opportunity to properly evaluate the injury. Any participant suspected of having a concussion may only return to the activity after receiving a medical clearance.

In the case of an unconscious participant, they must only be moved by qualified health professionals. If no qualified health professional is on site, the participant must not be moved – call and await arrival of the ambulance.

It is important not to be influenced by the individual, other athletes, coaching staff and parents or any others suggesting that they return to the competition. If there is any doubt, sit them out.

Participants with a suspected concussion should:

- Be immediately removed from participation
- Not be left alone initially (at least for the first 1–2 hours)
- Not drink alcohol
- Not use recreational drugs
- Not take certain prescription medications including aspirin, anti-inflammatory medications, sedative medications, or strong pain-relieving medications
- Not be sent home by themselves.
- Not drive a motor vehicle
- Be referred for appropriate medical assessment

### Refer the person

All participants with a concussion or a suspected concussion need a medical assessment by a registered sports and/or medical doctor for return to play guidance. If a doctor is not present, then the participant should be sent to a local general practice or local hospital emergency department. Urgent transfer to hospital is required if the participant displays any of the following symptoms:

- Loss of consciousness or seizures
- Confusion
- Deterioration following their injury (eg vomiting, increased headaches or drowsiness)
- Neck pain or spinal cord symptoms (eg numbness, tingling or weakness)

If there is any doubt on the participant's condition, they should be referred to hospital.

### Rest

Rest is very important after a concussion because it helps the brain to heal. Concussions affect people differently. While most people with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some will have symptoms that last for days or even weeks. A more serious concussion can last for months or longer. It is important that people do not ignore their symptoms and in general, a more conservative approach be used in cases where there is any uncertainty.

## Return

A concussed participant must not be allowed to return to competition, or in the case of juniors must not return to school, before having a medical clearance. In every case the decision regarding the timing of return to school or play should be made by a medical doctor with experience in managing concussion (Sports Doctor). Junior participants should not return to play until they have returned to school.

Participants should be returned to sport in a graduated manner that should be supervised by their medical practitioner.

## Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool

The Pocket Concussion Recognition Tool was designed to help identify concussion in children, youth and adults, and is a quick reference guide that can be referred to at any time for concussion recognition and management – [available online](#).

## References

[Sports Medicine Australia - Concussion in Sport Policy](#)

[Concussion in Sport Australia - Position Statement](#)

## Communication and Support for Members

This Policy will be made available on the NSWWA website and will be emailed to all Clubs.

Policy review date: 8 March 2025