

***ACC SportSmart***

**Sport-Related Concussion in  
New Zealand – National  
Guideline Update for  
Community Sport**

**Date:**

**September 2023**

# Purpose: Develop and adopt universal protocols for return to sport in New Zealand (in community sport)

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ACC is updating the “Sport Concussion in New Zealand – ACC National Guideline” with the primary objective of having universal return to sport protocols across all community sport in New Zealand.

The process of developing the protocols is included in the guideline is included in this pack.

ACC is seeking endorsement of the updated concussion guideline from the Board/ Executive of all ACC SportSmart partners.



# Summary and Current Endorsing Partners

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The recommended approach is that there should be a **minimum period of 21 days\* away** from full competition following a concussion and that **medical clearance must be obtained** prior to return to play. Return to work or school must also be achieved prior to return to play.

The guideline has been endorsed by:

- Royal NZ College of GPs
- Royal NZ College of Urgent Care Clinics
- Sport NZ and High Performance Sport NZ
- Health Quality Safety Commission and the Major Trauma Network
- Physiotherapy NZ
- Ministry of Education

\*day of injury is day 0



# Benefits of this approach

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- Increased player safety and wellbeing.
- Minimise the impact of concussive injury and risk of reinjury.
- Decreased confusion within the sporting community for players, caregivers, coaches and all those involved in managing sport.
- Consistent standard of care – GPs follow one consistent approach for safe return to play regardless of sport.
- Prevent ‘code hopping’ ie a player gets concussed in rugby but continues to play basketball.



# Current State in New Zealand

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- NZ Rugby and NZ Rugby League have varied 'stand down' periods.
- Other sports have no advice or variable advice.
- Estimated 30% under-reporting of concussion.

The next slide outlines how different the RTP (return to play) timeframe could be depending on sport.....





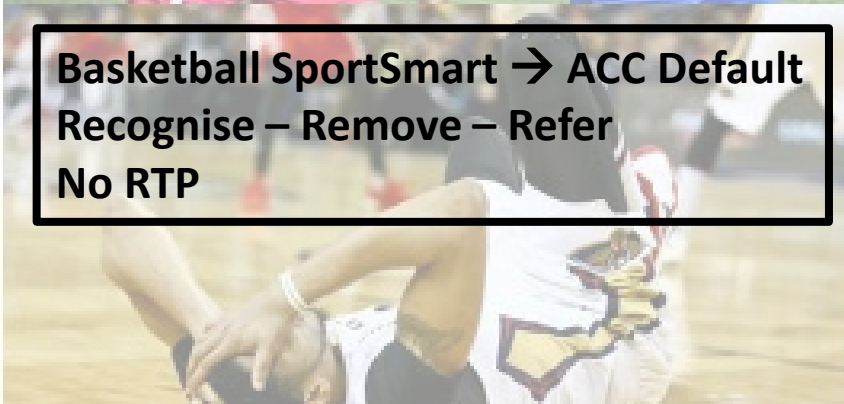
**RTP 6 Days minimum 2018**



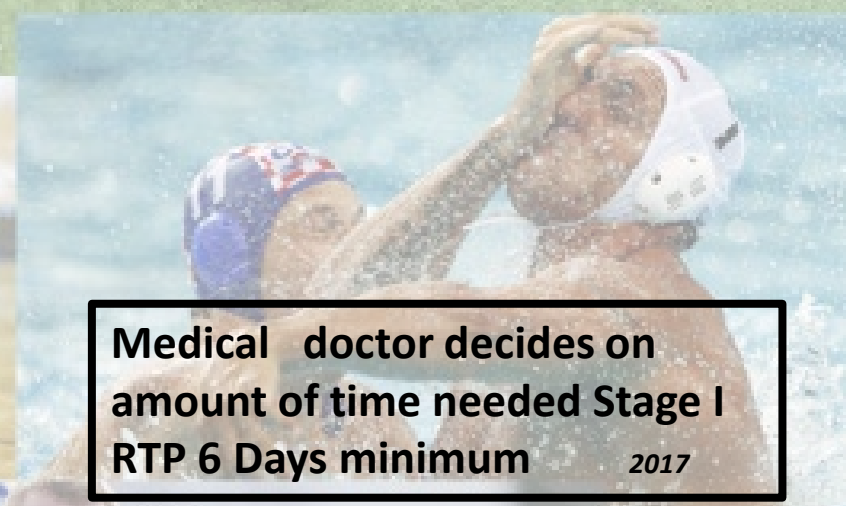
**U19 23 Days  
19+ 21 Days 2018**



**G RTP Process – 6 Stages  
Asymptomatic and back  
to school/work to start  
Stage 2  
RTP 7 Days**



**Basketball SportSmart → ACC Default  
Recognise – Remove – Refer  
No RTP**



**Medical doctor decides on  
amount of time needed Stage I  
RTP 6 Days minimum 2017**



**RTR 6 Days minimum  
Blue card system 2017**



**RTP 6 Days minimum 2018**



**U19 23 Days  
19+ 21 Days  
Blue card system 2023**



**RTP 6 Days minimum 2021**

# Development Process

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June 2023 ACC convened an expert panel including:

- Dr Stephen Kara – independent party (expertise and specialist interest in concussion)
- Dr Mark Fulcher – NZ Football Medical Director
- Dr John Mayhew – NZ Rugby League Medical Director
- Dr Ian Murphy – ACC Principal Clinical Advisor
- Sharon Kearney – Netball NZ Injury Prevention Consultant
- Melinda Parnell – Netball NZ Medical Director
- Karen Rasmussen – NZ Rugby Medical Manager
- Dr Graeme McCrory – Equestrian NZ Medical Director

The panel reviewed the latest research on sports-related concussion including the 2022 International Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport and UK Grassroots Sport concussion guidelines 2023.



## Development Process (cont)

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August 2023 ACC held a workshop with injury prevention reps from:

- NZ Football
- NZ Rugby League
- Netball NZ
- NZ Rugby
- Basketball NZ
- Touch NZ

To discuss the implications of the guideline within each code and start to collectively develop an implementation plan ready for the 2024 winter sport season. This will include support from ACC for public messaging re the need and benefits.

It is intended that over time this universal approach will extend to other sport/ recreation activities and settings, to ensure consistency regardless of the activities Kiwis take part in.





# GRADUATED RETURN TO EDUCATION/WORK & SPORT SUMMARY

STAGE 1	Relative Rest for 24–48 hours <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minimize screen time</li><li>• Gentle exercise</li></ul>
STAGE 2	Gradually introduce daily activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Activities away from school/work (introduce TV, increase reading, games etc.)</li><li>• Exercise –light physical activity (e.g. short walks)</li></ul>
STAGE 3	Increase tolerance for mental & exercise activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase study/work-related activities with rest periods</li><li>• Increase intensity of exercise</li></ul>
STAGE 4	Return to study/work and sport training <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Part-time return to education/work</li><li>• Start training activities without risk of head impact</li></ul>
STAGE 5	Return to normal work/education and full training <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full work/education</li><li>• If symptom-free at rest for 14 days consider full training</li></ul>
STAGE 6	<b>Return to sports competition (NOT before day 21) as long as symptom free at rest for 14 days and during the pre-competition training of Stage 5</b>

## Requested Action

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Review the guideline and consider for endorsement at a Board/ Executive level.

