

# MCRI and AFL team up to tackle concussion in kids

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Credit: Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Experts from Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) and the AFL have teamed up to create an app that helps parents recognise a concussion and manage recovery in children.

Concussion is a growing public health problem with one in 20 [children](#) sustaining a [concussion](#) by the age of 16. Recognition of concussion symptoms by [parents](#) is poor, even if they are present when an incident occurs.

The HeadCheck app guides non-medical users through a series of

concise questions and observations to quickly identify whether a child's head injury requires an ambulance, hospital, or a GP visit.

MCRI's Professor Vicki Anderson said the app was developed following research into the number of children presenting to hospital with [concussion symptoms](#) more than 24 hours after receiving a head knock.

"Our research shows that parents or trainers don't always recognise when a concussion has occurred and will bring a child into the emergency department with symptoms of headache, lethargy or confusion often a day or more following an incident," Prof Anderson said.

"We wanted to find a way to educate parents and trainers to recognise when medical attention is needed after a head knock occurs."

MCRI has been testing the app with parents and first aid professionals for some time to ensure it meets the needs of users.

"Our feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and we're excited to be able to make HeadCheck widely available thanks to our partnership with the AFL," Prof Anderson said.

One of the app's key features is that it offers parents a recovery guide based on the latest research and clinical guidelines and is tailored to each child. The app provides support for parents to get their children safely back to school, play and contact sport.

Dr. Peter Harcourt, AFL Chief Medical Officer, said the app is now included in the Level 1 First Aid trainers course managed by the AFL.

"We've recognised concussion is an important issue at AFL junior level and want to provide greater support to trainers and coaches in detecting a concussion," Dr. Harcourt said.

AFLW player and HeadCheck ambassador Brittany Bonnici is helping to raise awareness of concussion in children following a number of incidents during her own footballing career.

"In 2015, I had a bad run of concussions so I had to take the following year off and was only able to play two games of footy," Brittany said.

"It's really important for coaches and first aid volunteers to recognise when a concussion has occurred so kids can be treated as soon as possible."

Children typically take longer to recover from concussion than adults. A premature return to normal activities such as sport may put a child at risk of further injuries and worsen their symptoms.

The HeadCheck app is being launched nationally through AFL Junior Community Leagues and is available to download from the App and Google Play stores. HeadCheck has been developed by MCRI and AFL in conjunction with health technology company Curve Tomorrow.

**More information:** For more information visit [www.headcheck.com.au](http://www.headcheck.com.au)

Provided by Murdoch Children's Research Institute

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