

CONCUSSIONS

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that occurs when a blow or jolt to the head disrupts the normal functioning of the brain. Some people lose consciousness after a concussion, but others are just dazed or confused.

Facts about concussions

- A concussion doesn't always knock you out.
- Symptoms of a concussion can last hours, days, weeks, months or indefinitely.
- Concussions can cause disability affecting school, work, and social life.
- Returning to contact or collision sports before you have completely recovered from a concussion increases your chances of long-term problems.

Concussion Symptoms

Symptoms of a concussion can fall in one or all three of the following categories:

1. Physical Symptoms
2. Cognitive Symptoms
3. Social and Emotional Symptoms

Physical Symptoms

- Head Ache
- Neck Pain
- Nausea
- Ringing in the ears
- Lack of energy and constantly feeling physically and mentally tired.
- Dizziness, light-headed, and loss of balance.
- Blurred or double vision and sensitivity to light.
- Increased sensitivity to sounds.
- Loss of sense of taste and smell.
- Change in sleep patterns, especially waking up a lot at night.

Cognitive Symptoms

- Difficulty concentrating and paying attention.
- Trouble with learning and memory.
- Problems with word-finding and putting thoughts into words.
- Easily confused and losing track of time and place.
- Slower in thinking, acting, reading and speaking.
- Easily distracted.
- Trouble doing more than one thing at a time.
- Lack of organization in everyday tasks.

Social and Emotional Symptoms

- Mood changes including irritability, anxiousness, and tearfulness.
- Decreased motivation.
- Easily overwhelmed.
- More impulsive and disinhibited.
- Withdrawn and wanting to avoid social situations, especially if there are many people.

Post Concussion Syndrome (PCS)

- Post-concussion syndrome is a collection of physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms that lasts for a varying amount of time after a concussion.
- Some symptoms shows up right away, but others may not be noticed for days or weeks after an injury.
- Some resolve very quickly, but others, like fatigue, can last much longer.

How do PCS Symptoms show up in school?

- After one concussion, a student may have one or more PCS symptoms that cause difficulties in the classroom. Here are some examples. The student might:
- Get tired easily
- Be bothered by bright fluorescent lights, or loud noises.
- Become easily distracted.
- Have trouble doing more than one thing.
- Take longer and need more repetition to learn new material.
- Read slower than normal.
- Get dizzy, gets headaches.
- Gets frustrated or irritated more easily.

Strategies that may help students with concussions.

- **Need for cognitive rest**
- While a child or teen is experiencing post-concussion symptoms, it is very important that they not only get as much sleep as possible and limit exertion in activities of daily living, but limit scholastic and other cognitive (e.g. mental) activities to allow the brain time to heal. This means:
 - No text messaging
 - No video games, No television, No movies, No computer time
 - No homework or reduced levels of homework
 - Possible limits on school attendance and social activities (parties, dances, attending games etc.).
 - Schedule rest periods and provide with a calm quiet place to take a break or nap.
 - Extended time on tests
 - Reduced lighting
 - Break assignments and information into smaller chunks

First Aid for students suspected of Concussions

- There are two types of situations:
 - A responsive student with a concussion
 - An unresponsive student with a concussion.
- Do Not be fooled by the term “minor.” Minor still indicates that the brain has been damaged.

Responsive student

Signs to look for (ask the student):

- Dizziness
- Slight ringing in the ears
- Mild headache
- Severe headache
- Nausea
- Feeling like “in a fog”

Check for:

- Confusion
- Blurred or double vision
- Memory loss
- Irritability

First Aid Responsive Student

- Protect student from further harm. Remove from activity.
- Assign someone to monitor the student signs and symptoms. If signs or symptoms occur, send for emergency medical assistance.
- Notify parents. Ask them to monitor the student, and give them a checklist of signs and symptoms. Instruct them to take the student to a physician.
- In moderate to severe symptoms, send for medical assistance, stabilize the head and neck, monitor breathing, control any profuse bleeding, monitor for shock-treat if needed, immobilize any fractures or unstable injuries.

Unresponsive Student

Check For:

- Unresponsive to stimuli – call out the student's name or tap on the shoulder
- Irregular Breathing
- Pulse Irregularities
- Bleeding or wound at point of contact
- Blood or fluid from mouth, nose, or ears
- Bump or deformity at point of contact
- Convulsions
- Pupil abnormalities – unequal in size or fail to constrict to light

First Aid Unresponsive Student

- Contact emergency personnel immediately and assume that the student may also have a spine injury
- Stabilize the student's head and neck
- Monitor breathing and circulation and provide CPR if needed
- If breathing and circulation are present, continue with physical assessment
- Control any bleeding – if at site of injury avoid excess pressure over the wound
- Monitor and treat for shock
- Immobilize any fractures
- Assist emergency medical personnel as needed

Treatment for Concussion

- It takes time to recover from a concussion. Rest is a necessity to help your body recover from the injury.
- To help with headaches-take Tylenol. Do not take aspirin or ibuprofen, they may prolong any bleeding that might have occurred (the brain is bruised).
- Do not over stimulate the brain with TV, music, video games, any activity that works the brain: including school work (as stated earlier)- The brain needs rest.

Concussion Action Plan

- Remove the student from activity
- Ensure that the student is evaluated by a health care professional.
- Inform the student's parents or guardians about the possible concussion and give them information on concussions.
- Keep the student out of play the day of the injury and until an appropriate health care professional says the student is symptom-free and it is OK to return to activities.

Progressive Activity Program

- Step 1: Light exercise- 5 minutes on an exercise bike or a light jog. No weight lifting.
- Step 2: Running in the gym or on the field without helmet or other equipment.
- Step 3: Non-contact training drills in full uniform. Begin light weight training.
- Step 4: Full-contact practice or training.
- Step 5: Get back into the game.
- Discontinue activity immediately if signs or symptoms of a concussion return and get re-evaluated by a health care professional.