

Concussion/Head Injury

A Guide for School Recovery

Each year hundreds of K-12 students sustain a concussion as a result of a fall, motor vehicle accident, collision on the playground or sports field, or other activity. This guide provides information for students, families, and schools that may help understand head injury and how to support students who have suffered a concussion or head injury. Families and schools should always defer to medical advice when a student has suffered a brain injury of any kind.

What is a concussion?

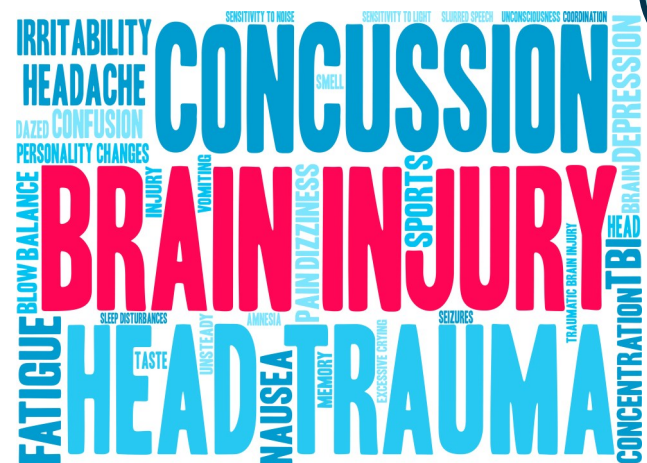
A concussion is a type of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). It is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head which causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth.

Traumatic brain injury can have wide-ranging physical and psychological effects. Some signs or symptoms occur immediately after the traumatic event, while others may appear days or weeks later.

Signs and Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of a TBI or concussion fall into the following three categories:

- ♦ Physical Symptoms
- ♦ Sensory Symptoms
- ♦ Cognitive Symptoms



Symptoms to Watch For:

Physical Symptoms:

Headache

Nausea or vomiting

Fatigue or drowsiness

Problems with speech

Dizziness or loss of balance

Sensory Symptoms:

Blurred vision

Bad taste in mouth

Ringing in the ears

Changes in ability to smell

Sensitivity to light or sound

Cognitive or Mental Symptoms:

Profound confusion

Agitation, combativeness or other unusual behavior

Slurred speech

Coma or other disorders of consciousness



Young Children's Symptoms:

Infants and young children with brain injuries might not be able to communicate headaches, sensory problems, confusion, and other similar symptoms. For young children it is important to observe any changes in the following:

- ♦ Eating and sleeping habits
- ♦ Unusual irritability
- ♦ Change in ability to pay attention
- ♦ Changes in mood or loss of interest in favorite activities

To assist a student with re-entry into school, Accommodations can be developed that will help the student return to pre-concussion performance. For more information

How Do I Prepare A Student for Return to School?

Step 1: Immediately after a concussion, it is beneficial to take a break from cognitive (thinking, processing) activities for up to a few days (or per doctor's orders).

- ◆ This may mean no school, no homework, no computer, no texting, no video games, and maybe no TV if it makes symptoms worse.
- ◆ As symptoms improve, slowly reintroduce these activities.

Step 2: Typically students can resume cognitive activities once they have had significant improvement in symptoms. It may be necessary to start slowly increasing activities, stopping if the student fatigues or symptoms develop or worsen. Taking frequent breaks is often necessary.

Step 3: School-specific activities should be increased gradually.

When feeling better, the student may try to do some homework at home, increasing the duration as tolerated.

Likewise, the student could start participating in school activities in short periods of time, working up to longer periods as tolerated.

Step 4: It will be important to work with the school team and your doctor, to create a plan to help the student begin re-entry into school and full participation.

The team should include:

- ◆ Parents/guardians
- ◆ Student
- ◆ School nurse
- ◆ Principal
- ◆ School psychologist
- ◆ Teachers and other school personnel such as counselors
- ◆ Others may be included as needed

Questions to Ask and Resources Available

Some students may require significant help to access the curriculum which would include adjusting the pace of curriculum, allowing the student to work in different environments or changing the method of instruction.

Questions to ask your school:

- ♦ What is the school's policy on absences due to concussion?
- ♦ How can a 504 Plan help with re-entry into school following a concussion?
- ♦ If concerns persist, can my student be evaluated for any long-term learning challenges due to his/her concussion to see if he/she may benefit from supports through an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?
 - ♦ How will the school work with our doctor to understand my student's level of need for guidance on recovery?
- ♦ How will my student's level of fatigue and ability be monitored at school once he/she begins to return to the school environment?
- ♦ How will I be kept informed of any progress or concerns that may arise?

For further assistance please contact:

South Dakota Parent Connection

(800) 640-4553

www.sdparent.org

South Dakota Statewide Family Engagement Center

(605) 484-3401

www.sdsfec.org

Additional Resources:

Children and Concussion/Brain Injury

<http://bit.ly/3ZF16GZ>

What Do They Mean... Accommodations Modifications?

CDC Head's UP- Safe Brain, Stronger Future

www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP

Returning to School After Concussion- A Fact Sheet for School Professionals

<http://bit.ly/3Wkg9R3>

Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER)

<http://bit.ly/3kjoelq>

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

<http://bit.ly/3H8p6sn>



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Resources for families of children with disabilities.

West River Foundation, SD Statewide Family Engagement Center Grant. Program financed with federal funds and local matching funds.

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