

How Will Symptoms Cause Difficulty in School?

After a concussion, a student may have one or more PCS symptoms that cause difficulties in the classroom. For example, the student might:

- Get tired easily in class and over the course of the day.
- Be bothered by bright light in the classroom or loud noises in the cafeteria.
- Be easily distracted.
- Have trouble multi-tasking, such as listening to the teacher and taking notes.
- Take longer and need more repetition to learn new material.
- Remember something one moment but not later.
- Be easily overwhelmed, especially with a steady flow of information.
- Read more slowly due to difficulty with comprehension.
- Have a headache that worsens.
- Feel dizzy after sudden movement or lose their balance more easily.
- Have trouble organizing and remembering homework.
- Lose track of time.
- Get lost or have trouble finding their way around.
- Get frustrated or irritated more easily, especially if over-loaded.
- Have unusual mood swings.
- Feel unmotivated, easily overwhelmed, impulsive, and uninhibited.
- Feel withdrawn and wants to avoid social situations.

How Schools Can Facilitate Recovery

A concussion can cause changes in a student's thinking, learning, and behavior. Initially, while cognitive deficits are present; their mental energy tends to be decreased—like a battery draining. Overexertion in class can make symptoms worse. It is important to ease the student back to full academic workload while the brain is healing. Accommodations need to be made and gradual workload increased as symptoms allow. The Concussion Management Team (CMT) can assist teachers and students make the necessary accommodations over the recovery period.

Why Be Sympathetic and Understanding?

It is understandable for teachers to be skeptical of work that is not turned in. Since a concussion is an invisible injury, there are no outward signs to suggest a student is still struggling.

It is important to have teachers understand the effects of a concussion and reassure the student that he or she will not fail from a few days of missing class, especially for the motivated student. This does not mean the student will not make up the critical lessons and tests, but the reassurance and understanding will help eliminate the stress. The student should hear a consistent message from everyone involved in their care. This sympathy will help decrease the stress and, in turn, help with recovery.

Helpful Suggestions

- Extended time on assignments and tests to accommodate for slower mental processing.
- Preferential seating so the teacher can monitor energy level and attention.
- A quiet room to take tests.
- Allow hat and/or sunglasses to be worn to reduce light sensitivity.
- Break information and assignments into manageable chunks.
- Allow student to leave early or with a buddy to reduce the chance of falling or becoming overwhelmed during the crowded hallways of passing period.

Ideas on how to help with attention and concentration problems:

- Use short and specific instructions and assignments and make sure the student has them in their planner.
- Be aware when the student starts to drift and help them get back to task with verbal or visual cues.
- Allow rest breaks if symptoms get worse.
- Highlight important points.
- Remove unnecessary distractions as much as possible.

In the first 24-48 hours after a concussion, it is important that the parent to be aware of the following **RED FLAGS**:

- Headaches that worsen
- Looking very drowsy
- Can't be awakened
- Can't recognize people or places
- Unusual behavior change
- Seizures
- Repeated vomiting
- Increasing confusion
- Increasing irritability
- Any progressively worsening symptom
- Loss of consciousness
- Slurred speech
- Weakness or numbness in arms or legs
- Neck pain

Call your doctor or go to your emergency department if you suddenly experience any of the above **RED FLAGS**.



Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms reported by the student:

- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, or in a fog
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just not “feeling right”

Signs observed by others:

- Appears dazed and/or stunned
- Is confused about assignment or position
- Forgets an instruction
- Is unsure of game, score, or opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Loses consciousness even briefly



How to Help With Comprehension and Memory

- Provide an outline of material to be covered.
- Provide teacher notes or a friend's notes.
- Allow use of a tape recorder.
- Allow use of a fact sheet to reduce mental energy.
- Have student state the point in their own words.
- Use multiple choice tests and an open book to reduce memory retrieval demands.

How to help with visual and auditory problems:

- If there will be a lot of blackboard use, provide notes ahead of time to reduce visual tracking.
- Make sure the student understands the directions or test questions.
- Encourage the student to use a ruler or piece of paper to assist in visual tracking when reading or taking a test.
- Test in a quiet area.
- Allow the use of headphones.



Dealing With Behavioral, Emotional and Social Issues

- Do not put the student on the spot for a question or answer.
- If agitated or frustrated, allow the student to leave class to take a break or rest.
- Be prepared to give extra help or assistance with work.
- Watch for unusual or inconsistent peer interactions.
- Provide the student with choices.

It is important to note that the student is ultimately responsible for their school work. However, making the necessary accommodations to their work load/schedule is necessary while they are compromised with a brain injury.

"With concussions there is not... a time frame or a span where you're feeling better. You feel like you're getting better... and you're back to where you started. It's a hard one to understand unless you've gone through it."

Sidney Crosby, September 5, 2013
The Globe and Mail; Josh Hargreaves

Myths About Concussions

- If you weren't knocked out, then you don't have a concussion.
- Everyone gets better in two weeks.
- Once the headache goes away, everything will be fine.
- Concussion is not a brain injury.
- If there are no physical symptoms, everything's okay.
- You should play through the pain—get back in the game!

Returning to sports before being completely recovered increases the chances of another injury, longer recovery times, and long-term problems

Facts About Concussion

- Concussion is a brain injury.
- There are an estimated 1.6 to 3.8 million sports or recreation related concussions each year.
- Motor vehicle accidents and falls are the most common causes of concussion.
- A concussion doesn't always knock you out.
- Symptoms of a concussion can last hours, days, weeks, months, or indefinitely.
- Symptoms sometimes do not appear until at least 24 hours after injury.
- Concussion can cause a lasting disability affecting school, behavior, and social life.

What is a Concussion?

A concussion occurs when a bump, blow or jolt to the head results in the brain striking against the skull, which often alters the brain's normal workings. This is commonly due to a car accident, falls, sports and recreational injuries, or an assault. Concussions often result in short-term impairment, such as memory loss and disorientation—along with potential for more serious complications, especially when repeated injury occurs.

Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS): When Problems Persist

Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS) is a collection of physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms that last for a varying amount of time after concussion. No two concussions are alike. Some symptoms show up right away, but others may not appear or be noticed for days or weeks after injury. Likewise, some symptoms might resolve fairly quickly, but others, especially fatigue, can persist much longer. The number and severity of symptoms, the speed of recovery, and the impact of symptoms on academic and social functioning will be different for each student.

How Long Will it Take?

While most concussions will resolve within 2 weeks, 10-20% of cases experience symptoms that will persist for a longer period of time. There are several elements that contribute to the amount of time students will feel post-concussive symptoms, including both individual and environmental factors.

This is why it is important to proactively monitor and manage the symptoms early on in the course of recovery, so the brain is provided with the optimal opportunity to heal.

When is it Safe to Return to Play?

Concussion Chalk Talk is a program that utilizes the individuals who see the student the most: parents, teachers, nurses, athletic trainers, and PCPs. After completing the physical stepwise progression, the final call for return to play is made by a medical professional trained in concussion, but all of these parties have valuable input.

A student-athlete is a student first, who must be able to show a full return to academics without any accommodations before completing the return to play progression.

For more information go to:
www.ConcussionChalkTalk.com
This program is a collaborative effort between:



Dartmouth
GEISEL SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE



New Hampshire Bureau of
Developmental Services
B D S

Concussion Chalk Talk is a program that assists schools with their concussion management policies and procedures. Athletic trainers manage concussions in sports with a stepwise progression back to play. Likewise, the student needs a stepwise progression to go back to the classroom. This program's design is to assist schools with understanding the necessary academic accommodations for a concussed student.

The program includes the formation of a Concussion Management Team (CMT), consisting of key personnel both inside and outside the school. A highlight of the program is the presence of a neuropsychologist on the CMT, who will visit the school to consult on challenging cases and answer questions.

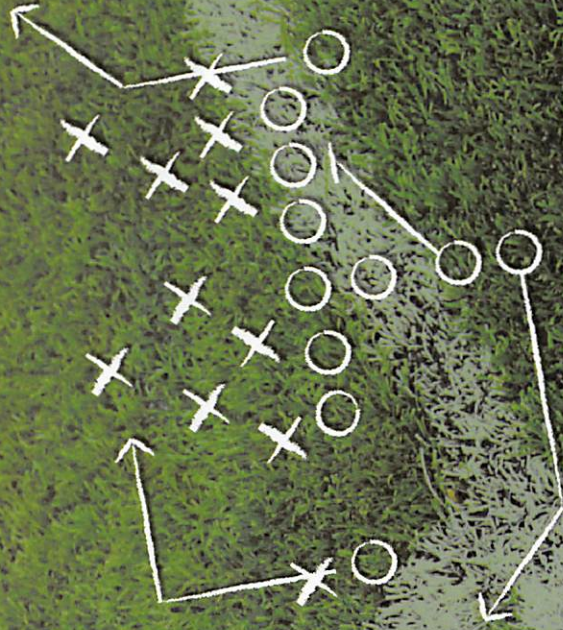
As no two concussions are the same, individualized treatment is preferred to safely and efficiently return students to performance.

Return to Learn + Return to Play = Return to Performance

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number H21MC26918; Traumatic Brain Injury Implementation. Total award \$977,000 which is 50% financed with nongovernmental sources. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

CONCUSSION CHALK TALK

Understanding the X's and O's of Concussion Management



A Guide for Students and Parents; and School Faculty and Staff