

St. Anne's – Belfield School
Concussion Information for the Student
Appendix V

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. A concussion can be caused by a blow to the head or body, which causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull. Concussions affect the metabolic processes of the brain. This means that the chemicals are not reacting with each other and your brain does not work normally. All concussions are a serious medical concern, even “getting your bell rung”. MRI’s and CT’s are good for ruling out more time sensitive injuries such as bleeding in/around the brain or a skull fracture, however they do not diagnose a concussion. Signs/symptoms of a concussion can show immediately or may not show up for days or weeks later. If you have any of these signs/symptoms, seek medical attention as soon as possible.

Observed Signs:

Appears dazed or confused
Does not understand simple instructions
Does not have short term recall
Appears clumsy or disoriented
Appears irritable or fatigued
Slow to answer questions
Appears more emotional
Vomiting
Does not recall events before or after injury
Has balance problems

Reported Symptoms:

Headache or feeling of pressure
Vision problems
Nauseous
Feeling dizzy or in a fog
Complains of light or noise sensitivity
Complains of ringing in the ears
Complains of problems concentrating
Complains of problems remembering

What to do if you think you have a concussion.

If you have taken a hard blow to the head or body and believe you have a concussion you should tell your coach, faculty member, parent, and/or athletic trainer. Also, if you see a teammate receive a hard blow to the head or body and starts to show any of the above signs, be certain to tell your coach, faculty member, parent and/or athletic trainer. If you do have a concussion, try to reduce the stress on your brain and allow appropriate time to heal.

Return to School and Normal Daily Activity

Concussions can affect your ability to do schoolwork, play video games, use a computer, drive, exercise and many other activities. Rest is the key to proper healing following a concussion. Decreasing the stress on the brain early after a concussion may lessen symptoms and shorten recovery time. If you attempt any activity that causes an increase in your symptoms you should stop the activity. Return to school should be done as a progression of gradually increasing periods of time. You should avoid areas or times of extreme noise or overstimulation, including noisy hallways or cafeterias as well as group socializing.

Return to Play

If not handled with care, concussions can lead to more severe medical problems, including death. Some signs/symptoms will resolve immediately, others will linger for days or weeks. It is important that you do not return to activity before you have completely healed from the concussion. If you obtain a second blow to the head before your symptoms from the first concussion have ended, then the possibility of long term effects is greater and there is a chance of a Second Impact Syndrome (SIS). SIS occurs when you have a second concussion before the initial injury has healed. This causes rapid brain swelling, long term effects on brain function and can be fatal. You will not be able to return to play until you are symptom free. When you no longer report any symptoms you may begin a slow progression back to activity as long as no symptoms return.

Short Term Effects

After a student sustains one concussion, they are more likely to sustain a second one, compared to others that have not been concussed. Repeat concussions, even when mild, can increase the risk of post-concussive symptoms, such as headaches, memory loss, difficulty concentrating, behavior or personality changes, extreme fatigue, etc. These symptoms may last only a short time or could remain a problem to the student for months or longer.

Long Term Effects

Very little is known about the long term effects of concussion however, more research is focusing on this area in the past several years. Some studies of NFL players link a history of concussions to degeneration of brain cells, dementia and/or Alzheimer's, as well as depression. Effects of sports concussion in early adulthood has been shown to persist beyond 30 years and can cause cognitive and motor function alteration.

Websites of Interest

http://www.cdc.gov/concussion/headsup/high_school.html

Video: Outside the Lines on ESPN, <http://espn.go.com/video/clip?id=3094263>

Video: Brandon's Story, http://www.cdc.gov/TraumaticBrainInjury/CTK_Video_WM_BB.html

A Parent's Guide to Concussion in Sports, <http://www.nfhs.org/>