

Post- Concussion Management

Students who have been diagnosed with a concussion require both physical and cognitive rest. Delay in instituting medical provider orders for such rest may prolong recovery from a concussion. Private medical provider's orders for avoidance of cognitive and physical activity and graduated return to activity should be followed and monitored both at home and at school. Districts should consult their medical director if further discussion and/or clarification is needed regarding a private medical provider's orders, or in the absence of private medical provider orders. Additionally, children and adolescents are at increased risk of protracted recovery and severe, potential permanent disability (e.g. early dementia also known as chronic traumatic encephalopathy), or even death if they sustain another concussion before fully recovering from the first concussion. Therefore, it is imperative that a student is fully recovered before resuming activities that may result in another concussion. Best practice warrants that, whenever there is a question of safety, a medical professional err on the side of caution and hold the athlete out for a game, the remainder of the season, or even a full year.

Cognitive Rest

Cognitive rest requires that the student avoid participation in, or exposure to, activities that require concentration or mental stimulation including, but not limited to:

- Computers and video games
- Television viewing
- Texting
- Reading or writing
- Studying or homework
- Taking a test or completing significant projects
- Loud music
- Bright lights

Parents/guardians, teachers, and other district staff should watch for signs of concussion symptoms such as fatigue, irritability, headaches, blurred vision, or dizziness; reappearing with any type of mental activity or stimulation. If any these signs and symptoms occur, the student should cease the activity. Return of symptoms should guide whether the student should participate in an activity. Initially a student with a concussion may only be able to attend school for a few hours per day and/or need rest periods during the day. Students may exhibit increased difficulties with focusing, memory, learning new information, and/or an increase in irritability or impulsivity. Districts should have policies and procedures in place related to transitioning students back to school and for making accommodations for missed tests and assignments. If the student's symptoms last longer than 7-14 days, a medical provider should consider referring the student for an evaluation by a neuropsychologist, neurologist, physiatrist, or other medical specialist in traumatic brain injury. 1 0

Generally, school principals are permitted to authorize certain testing accommodations for students who incur an injury within 30 days prior to the test administration. Principals should refer to test manuals available at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/apda/manuals/> for information on the procedures they must follow in authorizing such accommodations. These manuals also provide information on the provisions for a student to be medically excused from a State test, as well as opportunities for make ups.

In some situations, a 504 plan may be appropriate for students whose concussion symptoms are significant or last 6 months or longer. Section 504 is part of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and is designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education. Section 504 requires a school district to provide a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) to each qualified student with a disability who is in the school district's jurisdiction, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability. Under Section 504, FAPE consists of the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services designed to meet the student's individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met.

More information is available on Section 504 law at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>

A Q&A on Section 504 including information on addressing temporary impairments such as concussions is available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>

Physical Rest

Physical rest includes getting adequate sleep, taking frequent rest periods or naps, and avoiding physical activity that requires exertion. Some activities that should be avoided include, but are not limited to:

- Ones that result in contact and collision and are high risk for re-injury
- High speed and/or intense exercise and/or sports
- Any activity that results in an increased heart rate or increased head pressure (e.g. straining or strength training)

Students may feel sad or angry about having to limit activities, or having difficulties keeping up in school. Students should be reassured that the situation is temporary, that the goal is to help the student get back to full activity as soon as it is safe, and to avoid activities which will delay their recovery. Students should be informed that the concussion will resolve more quickly when they follow their medical provider's orders as supported by various studies. Students will need encouragement and support at home and school until symptoms fully resolve.