



# CONCUSSION INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

This information sheet is for educational purposes only. If you would like to provide feedback on this information sheet please visit [sitoutconcussion.org.au](http://sitoutconcussion.org.au) and complete the feedback form.

## WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by sudden strong movement of the brain against the skull. This is caused by a collision with another person or object (e.g., playground equipment, ground, desk, etc.). A child does not need to be knocked out (lose consciousness) to have a concussion. Most concussion injuries do not involve any loss of consciousness.

If a student receives a bump or blow to the head, or body, and that causes a jarring of the head or neck - it is important to monitor them for signs and symptoms. Recognizing concussion and acting when it is suspected can prevent further injury and help with recovery.

Sport and play are an important part of the healthy growth and development of children and young people, and they should be encouraged to participate. It is important however to be aware of concussion so that children may be given the best care when needed.

## WHEN SHOULD I SEND A STUDENT TO A DOCTOR?

If a student has any of the signs or symptoms listed, then they should be assessed by a doctor. It is important to note when, for how long and how many there are so you can tell the doctor. There is a [concussion management tool](#) and [signs and symptoms checklist](#) available to assist.

### Signs observed by others:

- Appearing dazed or stunned
- Repeating questions
- Can't recall events before or after the injury
- Confused about events
- Showing personality or behaviour changes



### Symptoms reported by the child:

- Headache or "pressure" in the head
- Dizziness and/or loss of balance
- Feeling tired
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Trouble sleeping
- Does not "feel right"
- Feeling more emotional, e.g. sad or nervous
- Trouble thinking clearly, concentrating or remembering

Signs and symptoms of concussion usually show up shortly after an injury. In some cases this does not occur until 24-48 hours after the injury. If there are no signs and symptoms at the time, it is important to monitor the child for the duration of the activity they are participating in. It is also important to let the parent know what has happened so they can monitor their child at home.

**Dial 000 or send the child to the nearest Emergency Department if these signs or symptoms appear, or are getting worse in the first 48 hours after a head injury.**

- Seizure or convulsion
- Losing consciousness (even briefly)
- Slurred speech
- Ongoing vomiting
- Blurry or double vision
- Severe headache or headache is getting worse
- Ongoing or worse neck pain
- Weakness, numbness or tingling in the arms, legs or face
- Having trouble walking
- Being more confused, unusual behaviour, more irritable

**In an emergency dial 000 for an ambulance.**

## WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT CONCUSSION?

Most people will have a quick and full recovery from their concussion. In some cases the recovery may take days, weeks, or longer. If a student has suffered a concussion in the past, then they are at a greater risk of having another one and they may also take longer to recover. Long term effects of concussion can include poor attention span, headache, impaired memory, behaviour problems, and learning difficulties.

Sports are a common activity where a student can sustain a concussion. The peak age for concussion is 14 years old. It is around this age that the athlete is transitioning to adult sports which are more intensive and competitive. Also, at this age the musculoskeletal system is still developing and as a result many young people are more uncoordinated and injury prone.

## TREATMENT

The most important treatment for a head injury is complete rest, both physically and mentally. Students should not exercise, use computer screens, and play video games or study for at least 24 hours following a concussion. It is likely they will need some time away from school and physical activity.

If a concussion occurs during sport or physical activity the student should stop immediately and not return to sport until seen and cleared to do so by a doctor.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MY STUDENTS RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER A CONCUSSION?

Supporting students to recover from concussion requires a collaborative approach among school professionals, health care providers, and parents. The student will need to take a gradual and staged return to both school and physical activity. This depends on the individual child and advice from their doctor. Follow the advice given by the student's GP to manage their concussion and plan a gradual, staged return to school and physical activity.

The signs and symptoms of concussion may not be visible at the time of injury. Signs and symptoms may take time to appear, and may become evident during school hours.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU WATCH FOR WHEN A STUDENT RETURNS TO SCHOOL AFTER A CONCUSSION?

- Problems paying attention or concentrating
- Problems remembering or learning new materials
- Taking longer than usual to complete tasks or assignments
- Inappropriate or impulsive behaviour during class
- Greater irritability
- More emotional and less able to handle stress

It is important to remember that these changes are a normal part of the recovery process and may persist for several months. If the student is experiencing ongoing symptoms after 3-4 weeks, ask the parent to please contact the Coordinator of the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program at one of the following hospitals.

## Returning to study

Students who are returning to school after a concussion may need to:

- Take rest breaks when needed
- Take time away from school or spend fewer hours at school
- Be given extra time to complete tests/exams or assignments
- Be given extra help with schoolwork

Any concerns should be discussed with the parent who can then follow up with their GP or the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program listed at the end of the fact sheet.

## Returning to sport or recreation activity

Students should not participate in school or club sports, or exercise until symptom free and cleared to do so by a doctor. This includes physical education class, sports practices or games and physical activity at recess.

The student will need to take a gradual and staged return to activity. This depends on the individual child and advice from their doctor. Ask the parent if the student has been cleared by a GP before allowing them to participate in sports or activities.

[Return to school](#) and [return to activity](#) plans are available as tools to help assist in the safe return of the student.

**If the student is experiencing ongoing symptoms after 3-4 weeks, ask the parent to please contact the Coordinator of the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program at one of the following hospitals.**

- **Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick**  
(02) 9382 1590
- **The Children's Hospital at Westmead**  
(02) 9845 2132
- **John Hunter Children's Hospital Newcastle**  
(02) 4925 7963

For other resources about concussion visit the Concussion page on Kids Health Website: [sitoutconcussion.org.au](http://sitoutconcussion.org.au)

## WHAT ACTION DO I TAKE IF I SUSPECT CONCUSSION?

1. Remove the child from play. If the child receives a bump or blow that causes a jarring of the head or neck it is important to check for signs and symptoms of concussion. Signs and symptoms of concussion usually show up shortly after an injury. In some cases this does not occur until 24-48 hours after the injury. If there are no signs and symptoms at the time continue to monitor the child for the duration of the activity they are participating in. Let the parent know what has happened so they can monitor their child at home. Athletes should not return to activity the same day.
2. Refer the child for medical care. If the child has serious signs or symptoms of concussion they should be sent to the emergency department. If not serious, the child should be referred to a GP.
3. Inform the parent of the injury. Let the parent know about the possibility of concussion in their child. It is a good idea to have fact sheets available for parents. This sheet can help parents monitor their child for signs and symptoms at home.