

Understanding Concussion and Its Impact on Learning

A concussion can impact a child's ability to learn and stay focused. Regardless of the intensity of the head impact, a concussion is a type of brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. It is caused by a bump, blow or jolt (with or without physical contact) to the head. **Concussions can occur without loss of consciousness.**

Signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after an injury or may not appear or be noticed until hours or days after the injury.

Physical symptoms that are common following a concussion may include:

- Headaches
- Double Vision
- Light & Noise Sensitivity
- Dizziness
- Lack of Coordination
- Physical Fatigue

Learning difficulties that are common following a concussion may include:

- Mental Fatigue
- Attention Slippage
- Memory Lapses
- Slower ability to take in/respond to new information
- (Possibly) language problems

Any of these symptoms may negatively impact a student's learning, behavior, emotional regulation, or social functioning when they return to school.

NORTH CAROLINA BRAIN INJURY ADVISORY COUNCIL CHILDREN & YOUTH COMMITTEE

Additional Resources

www.cdc.gov/headsup

Return-to-Learn After Concussion

NC State Board of Education Policy (HRS-E-001)

Gfeller-Waller Concussion Awareness Act



PARENT INFORMATION

RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER A Concussion

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Head Injury: Concussion

There are many signs and symptoms of a head injury or concussion. If your child or teen has one or more of the symptoms below following an injury to their head or neck, seek medical attention right away.

- **Appears dazed or stunned**
- **Is confused about events**
- **Answers questions slowly**
- **Repeats questions**
- **Can't recall events prior to/after the hit, bump or fall**
- **Nausea/vomiting**
- **Loses consciousness (*even briefly*)**
- **Shows behavioral or personality changes**
- **Forgets their class schedule or assignments; other memory lapses**
- **Unsteady on their feet**



Returning to School After a Concussion:

How can I help my child return to school safely following a concussion?

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction has a policy requiring each public school system to develop a plan to provide needed support for students who have been diagnosed with a concussion.

Children and teens who return to school after a concussion may need to:

- **Take rest breaks as needed**
- **Spend fewer hours at school**
- **Be given more time to take tests or complete assignments**
- **Reduce time reading or writing or in other academic tasks**
- **Reduce time on computers or other electronic devices**



Steps Parents Should Take:

- **Seek/ensure treatment by a medical professional**
- **Find out who the “Concussion Contact” is at your child’s school**
- **Talk with your child’s teacher, school nurse, coach, school psychologist, and/or counselor about your child’s concussion and symptoms they are experiencing**
- **Provide the paperwork from your doctor, documenting the concussion and any suggested accommodations for school**
- **Provide ALL follow up documentation from the doctor to the appropriate school personnel**
- **Communicate with school staff members any concerns you have regarding your child’s recovery/functioning**

Learning, behavior, and emotions can be affected in many different ways and for differing lengths of time following a concussion. Your child’s school will assist you in developing a plan of action specific to your child in order to facilitate their safe return to the classroom/school environment.