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Concussions Special Needs Factsheet

What Teachers Should Know

A concussion (a temporary loss of brain function) can happen with any head injury. Concussions are common, and they don't only happen to athletes on playing fields. Any student could take a spill, knock his or her head, and get a concussion in a hallway, on a playground, or in the cafeteria.

Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness. And while most students with a concussion recover quickly and fully, some signs and symptoms of concussions can last for days, weeks, or longer. Recognizing concussions when they occur and taking the right steps toward healing can help prevent prolonged symptoms or further serious injury.

Signs of concussion include:

- confusion, dizziness, or lightheadedness
- clumsiness or loss of balance
- memory loss
- difficulty concentrating
- irritability and other mood or personality changes
- headache
- nausea or vomiting
- loss of consciousness
- blurred or double vision
- sensitivity to light and noise

Students with a concussion may:

- miss class time until they're cleared by a doctor
- need to avoid physical education classes, sports, or other physical activities
- need to avoid activities that require concentration, such as quizzes or tests
- need additional time for instruction
- need more time to complete homework assignments or take tests
- need to wear sunglasses due to light sensitivity
- benefit from having a 504 education plan

What Teachers Can Do

Encourage student-athletes to get concussion baseline testing at the beginning of the school year or

sports season. Baseline tests help doctors assess effects of the injury and healing after a concussion.

If you suspect a student had a possible concussion during the school day, send him or her to the school nurse right away. If the symptoms are severe (such as seizures or a period of unconsciousness) or the student's symptoms appear to be getting worse, get medical help immediately.

The amount of time a person needs to recover from a concussion depends on how long the symptoms last. Treatment is usually physical and cognitive rest. Healthy kids and teens can usually resume their normal activities within a few weeks, but each case is different. A doctor should monitor the student to make sure everything's OK. In the meantime, understand your student's restrictions about avoiding bright lights, loud noises, high activity levels, and tasks that require a lot of concentration.

Once symptoms have resolved and students are cleared by a doctor, they can begin a supervised, gradual return to normal schoolwork, athletics, and other activities.

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