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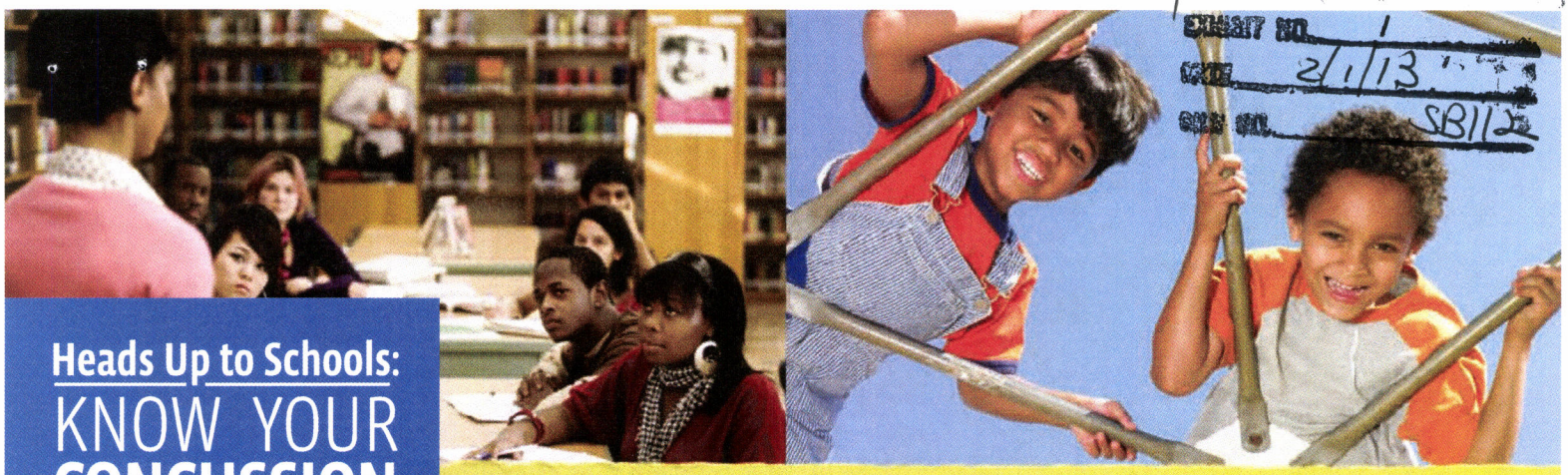

Heads Up to Schools: KNOW YOUR CONCUSSION ABCs

Assess the situation | **B**e alert for signs and symptoms | **C**ontact a health care professional

A Fact Sheet for Teachers, Counselors, and School Professionals

THE FACTS:

* All concussions are serious.
* Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness.
* Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help aid recovery and prevent further injury, or even death.

To download this fact sheet in Spanish, please visit: www.cdc.gov/Concussion.
Para obtener una copia electrónica de esta hoja de información en español, por favor visite: www.cdc.gov/Concussion.

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a fall or blow to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. Even what seems to be a mild bump to the head can be serious.

Children and adolescents are among those at greatest risk for concussion. The potential for a concussion is greatest during activities where collisions can occur, such as during physical education (PE) class, playground time, or school-based sports activities. However, concussions can happen any time a student's head comes into contact with a hard object, such as a floor, desk, or another student's head or body. Proper recognition and response to concussion can prevent further injury and help with recovery.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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What are the signs and symptoms of concussion?

The signs and symptoms of concussion can show up right after an injury or may not appear or be noticed until hours or days after the injury. Be alert for any of the following signs or symptoms. Also, watch for changes in how the student is acting or feeling, if symptoms are getting worse, or if the student just "doesn't feel right."

SIGNS OBSERVED BY TEACHERS AND SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about events
- Answers questions slowly
- Repeats questions
- Can't recall events *prior* to the hit, bump, or fall
- Can't recall events *after* the hit, bump, or fall
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Forgets class schedule or assignments

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY THE STUDENT

Thinking/Remembering:

- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Feeling more slowed down
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy

Physical:

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Fatigue or feeling tired
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Numbness or tingling
- Does not "feel right"

Emotional:

- Irritable
- Sad
- More emotional than usual
- Nervous

Sleep*:

- Drowsy
- Sleeps *less* than usual
- Sleeps *more* than usual
- Has trouble falling asleep

**Only ask about sleep symptoms if the injury occurred on a prior day.*

What are concussion danger signs?

Be alert for symptoms that worsen over time. The student should be seen in an emergency department right away if s/he has:

- One pupil (the black part in the middle of the eye) larger than the other
- Drowsiness or cannot be awakened
- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Difficulty recognizing people or places
- Increasing confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Unusual behavior
- Loss of consciousness (even a brief loss of consciousness should be taken seriously)

Children and teens with a concussion should NEVER return to sports or recreation activities on the same day the injury occurred. They should delay returning to their activities until a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion says they are symptom-free and it's OK to return to play. This means, until permitted, not returning to:

- Physical Education (PE) class,
- Sports practices or games, or
- Physical activity at recess.

For more information and tool kits for youth sports coaches and high school coaches, visit www.cdc.gov/Concussion.

How can I recognize a concussion?

Teachers and school counselors may be the first to notice changes in their students. The signs and symptoms can take time to appear and can become evident during concentration and learning activities in the classroom.

Send a student to the school nurse, or another professional designated to address health issues, if you notice or suspect that a student has:

1. *Any* kind of forceful blow to the head or to the body that results in rapid movement of the head,

-and-

2. *Any* change in the student's behavior, thinking, or physical functioning. (See the signs and symptoms of concussion.)

What do I need to know about my students returning to school after a concussion?

Supporting a student recovering from a concussion requires a collaborative approach among school professionals, health care providers, and parents, as s/he may need accommodations during recovery. If symptoms persist, a 504 meeting may be called. Section 504 Plans are implemented when students have a disability (temporary or permanent) that affects their performance in any manner.

What to look for after a concussion

When students return to school after a concussion, school professionals should watch for:

- Increased problems paying attention or concentrating
- Increased problems remembering or learning new information
- Longer time needed to complete tasks or assignments
- Difficulty organizing tasks
- Inappropriate or impulsive behavior during class
- Greater irritability
- Less ability to copy with stress or more emotional

Services and accommodations for students may include speech-language therapy, environmental adaptations, curriculum modifications, and behavioral strategies.

Students may need to limit activities while they are recovering from a concussion. Exercising or activities that involve a lot of concentration, such as studying, working on the computer, or playing video games, may cause concussion symptoms (such as headache or tiredness) to reappear or get worse.

Students 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,
- Receive help with schoolwork, and/or
- Reduce time spent on the computer, reading, or writing.

It is normal for students to feel frustrated, sad, and even angry because they cannot return to recreation or sports right away, or cannot keep up with their schoolwork. A student may also feel isolated from peers and social networks. Talk with the student about these issues and offer support and encouragement. As the student's symptoms decrease, the extra help or support can be removed gradually.

*For more information on concussion and to order additional materials for school professionals **FREE-OF-CHARGE**, visit: www.cdc.gov/Concussion.