

MCPS Concussion Information

What is a concussion?

According to the CDC, a concussion is “a type of traumatic brain injury—or TBI—caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. This sudden movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging brain cells.” (2017).

The chemical changes in the brain that occur with concussion can’t be seen on X-ray, CT scan or MRI. Because of this, health care providers do not typically recommend those tests unless your child has symptoms of a different type of traumatic brain injury. (See Danger Signs below.)

Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion

Signs Observed by Others:

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about events
- Answers question slowly
- Repeats questions
- Can’t remember events *BEFORE* the hit, bump or fall
- Shows behavior or personality changes
- Forgets things they normally know like class schedule

Symptoms Reported By Your Child

Thinking/Remembering

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

Emotional

- Irritable
- Sad
- More emotional than usual
- Nervous

Sleep

- Drowsy
- Sleeps less than usual

- Sleeps more than usual
- Has trouble falling asleep

Physical

- Headache or pressure in head (more than pain just where bump occurred)
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Fatigue or feeling tired
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to noise
- Sensitivity to light
- Numbness or tingling
- Does not feel “right”



Danger Signs

Your child must go to emergency room right away if your child has:

- One pupil (black part of eye) is larger than other
- Very drowsy or can’t be awakened
- A severe or worsening headache
- Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Repeated vomiting or severe nausea
- Slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Difficulty recognizing people or places
- Increasing confusion, restlessness or unusual behavior
- Loss of consciousness (even if brief)

How can I help my child recover from a concussion?

Rest is the *initial* recommended treatment. This means resting or sleeping, no strenuous exercise and avoiding screen and reading time. *At a minimum*, we recommend rest for the day of concussion. Attached, you will find a Return to Learn Protocol. How quickly a child goes through each stage will be different for each child and each injury. However, most students will recover fully by 3-4 weeks and many will find they are able to do full school days within 1-3 days.

Besides initial rest and potentially shorter school days initially, simple classroom adjustments may help your child. Again, not all students will need adjustments depending on his/her symptoms and recovery process. Some students may need adjustments that change with each day and may last for several weeks. See “Concussion Guidelines: Parent handout” for a list of common adjustments. This handout also has “return to Learn” guidelines. Because not all students need the same adjustments or follow the same recovery time, it is important for you and your child to communicate with the school team as to your child’s needs.

Please do the following if you suspect your child has a concussion:

- **See danger signs above!** Have them seen in an emergency department right away if any danger signs are present.
- **Have** your child *rest* without screen time (TV, playing video’s, using phone or computer), reading or doing strenuous activity for *at least the day of injury*.
- **Do not give your child ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) until your health care provider tells you it is OK to do.** Tylenol (acetaminophen) is generally OK to use.
- **Take your child to his/her doctor (health care provider/ HCP) before returning to sports, PE or recess.**
 - Ask them to complete the Healthcare Provider Communication form.
 - Add your signature to the bottom of the form.
 - Return the form to the school nurse/ school office/athletic trainer if applicable.
- **Tell** the school what concussion symptoms your child has when they come back to school and as they improve or change. If there is no communication from you or your health care provider upon your child’s return to school, the school may assume your child can return to PE and recess.

Centers for Disease Control. (2017). *What is a concussion*. Retrieved November 28, 2017 from [Centers for Disease Control Heads Up Concussion4 basics What is a concussion?](#)