

Concussion in schools

What is Concussion?

Concussion is typically defined as the temporary unconsciousness or confusion with other symptoms caused by a blow or acceleration/deceleration of the head. More severe traumatic brain injuries can cause bruising, damage to the blood vessels, and injury to the nerves.

Typical causes of concussion in schools

Concussion incidents can occur in a whole range of incident scenarios in the School environment. Students can have a fall, knock their head and get a concussion from an incident in the hallway, playground, sports field, ski field, cafeteria, or school yard brawl.

Most commonly incidents occur on the sporting field from high risk 'contact sports' such as rugby, football, cricket, hockey, soccer, basketball, snow sports, etc.

Typical symptoms of Concussion

Concussions can be difficult to diagnose as 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. Symptoms take many forms and may be emotional, affect memory, physical or exhibit several signs of tiredness. It is important to recognize the signs of a concussion so you can take the proper steps to treat the injury.

Warning signs for teachers and parents

- Student are unable recall events before or after the knock
- Student forgets class timetable or subjects
- Student shows behaviour or personality changes
- Student appears dazed or stunned
- Student is confused about events
- Student can only answer questions slowly, constantly repeats questions

- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- One pupil (the black part in the middle of the eye) becomes larger than the other
- Student has difficulty recognising people or places
- Student shows increasing signs of confusion, restlessness, or agitation

First aid and medical response for suspected concussion



All concussions should be treated seriously. Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness and prompt proper response is required.

- Remove player from field of play, in a sporting situation
- Advise parents
- Monitor closely within the first four hours of incident
- Seek medical attention (Visit Doctor / GP)
- Doctor may order a CT scan or an MRI to rule out bleeding or other serious brain injury
- The doctor will provide instructions for recovery
- Medications may be prescribed
- Ensure follow-up medical attention within 24 to 72 hours if symptoms worsen

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Risk management strategies

Risk management strategies to assist in preventing concussion

Concussion events are typically unexpected and therefore difficult to predict and prevent. Some common-sense precautions can help lessen the possibility of concussive injury.

- Develop formal concussion management policy and procedures
- Ensure the team manager is familiar with the concussion management policy and procedures
- Ensure appropriate supervision at games
- Remove player from field of play
- Advise parents
- Monitor closely within the first four hours of incident
- Students should not travel home alone on public transport
- Avoid transport (especially plane travel after incident)
- No play until student provides GP clearance

Protective equipment

Wearing headgear, padding, mouth and eye guards may help safeguard against traumatic injuries to the head and face but might not prevent concussion.

If worn, ensure that the equipment meets industry safety standards, is properly fitted, well maintained, and worn consistently.

Guard against repeat concussions

There is concern that repeated concussions may cause cumulative effects on the brain and may have serious consequences, including permanent brain damage and long-term effects.

In these situations ensure the student is seeking the appropriate medical advice for their condition.

Further information

For further information on risk management strategies for managing concussion in your school, please contact your Willis Towers Watson insurance broker for a discussion.

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