

Adolescent Concussion-Management Guideline for Schools

Article Review

By: Michael A. Lee and Vito A. Perriello, Jr., MD

- Minor head injuries, bell ringers and dings are in fact concussions
- Concussions can occur without loss of consciousness, vomiting, and other symptoms
- Some signs include:
 - Headache
 - Dizziness
 - “Fogginess”
 - Poor attention span
 - Unusual behavior
 - Nausea
 - Lightheadedness
 - Difficulty with concentration and memory
 - Decreased processing speed
- Thinking “exercising the brain” and nearly all cognitive tasks have the same effect on prolonging concussion symptoms and slowing recovery as does physical exertion.
- Restricting mental and physical exertion until asymptomatic and then gradually increasing each is the cornerstone of this treatment strategy.
- A concussed person should not return to school until his/her headaches and other symptoms have cleared.
 - Avoid the following:
 - Reading
 - Computer use
 - Video games/movies/television
 - Text messaging
 - Physical exercise
 - Hot tubs
 - Socializing with friends
- Return to school protocol:
 - Once headache free, begin brief periods of reading or studying
 - Return to school for gradual increasing periods of time when they can tolerate a couple of hours of thinking
 - If headache or other symptoms return, they should discontinue the activity and resume rest
- School adaptations:
 - Starting school later in order to sleep longer
 - Driven to school instead of taking the bus, to avoid noise
 - Go to nurse’s office, lie down and skip the following period
 - Return home
 - Math and chemistry classes may need to be avoided initially since they seem to cause more symptoms than other classes
 - Avoided non-core classes
 - Delaying tests and exams (PSAT, SAT, ACT, AP, GRE)
 - Un-timed tests and limited to one test a day
 - Preprinted notes
 - Read materials to them
 - Tutors
 - Elevators: should not walk upstairs
 - Excused from music classes, avoid assemblies, noisy lunches, dances, and sporting events
 - Sunglasses if fluorescent light bothers them
 - Sit in front of class and away from windows and doors