

Tips for Teachers

Symptoms of concussion often create learning difficulties for students. Immediately after diagnosis of a concussion, an individualized plan for learning adjustments should be initiated with a gradual, monitored return to full academics as symptoms clear.

Typical classroom adjustments and accommodations include:

- Reduce course workload
- Decrease homework
- Allow breaks during the day (i.e. rest in quiet area)
- Allow additional time to complete assignments
- Provide instructor's notes, outline, or study guide for student
- Avoid over-stimulation (noise and light)
- Avoid testing or completion of major projects during recovery when possible

The following are additional adjustment or accommodations that may be made in the classroom for specific concussion symptoms:

Physical Symptoms:

- **Headache** (most common reported symptom)
 - Implications at school
 - Poor concentration...may vary throughout day
 - Can be triggered by fluorescent lighting, loud noises, and focusing on tasks
 - Potential Adjustments in School Setting
 - Frequent breaks
 - Reduce exposure to aggravators (i.e. turn off fluorescent lights)
 - Rest as needed in nurse's office or quiet area
- **Dizziness/Lightheadedness**
 - Implications at school
 - Standing quickly or walking in crowded environment may present a challenge
 - Often provoked by visual stimulus (rapid eye movements, videos, etc.)
 - Potential Adjustments in School Setting
 - Allow student to put head down if symptoms worsen

- Early dismissal from class and extra time to get from class to class to avoid crowded hallways
- **Visual symptoms** (Light sensitivity, double vision, blurry vision)
 - Implications at school
 - Trouble seeing slide presentations, movies, smart boards, computers, iPads, tablets, etc.
 - Difficulty reading and copying
 - Difficulty paying attention to visual tasks
 - Potential Adjustments in School Setting
 - Reduce brightness on the screens
 - Student may wear hat or sunglasses in school
 - Audiotapes instead of books
 - Seat student close to center of classroom activities (preferential seating if blurry vision)
 - Turn off fluorescent lights
 - Cover one eye with patch/tape or one lens if glasses are worn (double vision)
- **Noise Sensitivity**
 - Implications at school
 - Troubles with various noises in several school settings: Lunchroom, shop classes, band, choir, P.E. classes, hallways
 - Organized sports practices
 - Potential Adjustments in School Setting
 - Allow student to eat lunch in quiet area with classmate
 - Limit or avoid band, choir, shop classes
 - Avoid noisy gyms and organized sports practices and games
 - Consider use of ear plugs
 - Early dismissal from class to avoid crowded, noisy hallways

Sleep Issues:

- Implications at school
 - Excessive fatigue can hamper memory for new or past learning or ability to attend and focus
 - Insufficient sleep can lead to tardiness or excessive absences
 - Difficulty getting to sleep or frequent waking at night may lead to sleeping in class
 - Excessive napping due to fatigue may lead to further disruptions of the sleep-cycle
- Potential Adjustments in School Setting

- Allow for late start or shortened school day to catch up on sleep
- Allow rest breaks during day if needed

Thinking/Cognitive Symptoms:

- **Difficulty concentrating or remembering**
 - Implications at school
 - Challenges learning new tasks and comprehending new material (slowed processing speed)
 - Difficulty recalling and applying previously learned material
 - Lack of focus in the classroom
 - Difficulties with test taking, including standardized tests
 - Potential Adjustments in School Setting
 - Avoid testing or completion of major projects during recovery time when possible
 - Provide extra time to complete non-standardized tests in a quiet environment
 - Postpone standardized testing when possible
 - Consider one test per day during exam periods
 - Assess knowledge using multiple-choice instead of open-ended questions
 - Consider use of preprinted notes, note taker, scribe or reader for oral testing
 - Consider tape recorder for note taking
 - Reduce the cognitive load and focus on the most important concepts for student to know...quality vs. quantity
 - Consider decreasing homework and reducing make-up work
 - Provide both oral and written instructions; clarify instructions

Emotional/Mood Symptoms:

- Implications at school
 - Sadness, irritability, changes in mood, nervousness, anxiety, may affect social relationships with adults and peers
 - Student may feel scared, angry, or depressed as a result of the concussion
- Potential Adjustments in School Setting
 - Develop an emotional support plan for the student. This may include an adult with whom the student can talk if overwhelmed
 - Mental fatigue may result in emotional meltdowns
 - Allow “signal” for student to remove himself/herself from classroom to de-escalate

- Provide reassurance what they are feeling is typical in the course of recovery (i.e. concern about getting behind and/or grades)