

GRADUATED RETURN TO LEARN PROTOCOL

Stages for Return to Learn



Stages		Symptom Free for Next 24 Hours?
1	Complete Physical and Cognitive Rest until Medical Clearance No school attendance, strict limits on technology usage, get plenty of rest.	YES: Begin Stage 2 NO: Continue Resting
2	Return to School for Half-Day with Academic Accommodations Continue limits on technology usage, no tests or homework, band or chorus, monitor symptoms. Classes should not exceed 30 min. with a 15 min. rest period after each 30 min. block.	YES: Begin Stage 3 NO: Rest further until symptom free
3	Continue Academic Accommodations Attend school full-time, increase work load gradually, homework should last no more than 60-90 min. per day, monitor symptoms, incorporate light aerobic activity. Classes should not exceed 45 min. with two 15 min. breaks per day.	YES: Move to Stage 4 NO: Return to Stage 2 until symptom free
4	Full Recovery to Academics Attend school full-time, self-advocate at school (meet due dates, etc.), resume normal activities, resume sports following graduated return to play.	YES: Return to School NO: Return to Stage 3 until symptom free

Make sure to use the Return To Learn card to track your progress. Please bring the card with you to all visits.

Concussion Symptoms

Physical		Thinking	Emotional	Sleep
Headaches	Numbness/ Tingling	Feeling mentally foggy	Irritability	Drowsiness
Sensitivity to light	Visual problems	Problems concentrating	Sadness	Sleeping more than usual
Nausea	Vomiting	Problems remembering	Feeling more emotional	Sleeping less than usual
Sensitivity to noise	Balance Problems	Feeling more slowed down	Nervousness	Trouble falling asleep
Fatigue	Dizziness			

Reference: Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport: the 3rd International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich (2008), Br J of Sports Med 2009; 43: i76-i84 doi:10.1136/bjism.2009.058248

Examples of Academic Accommodations

The following changes can help students suffering from a concussion. Each student may not need every item listed.

CLASSES AND ACTIVITIES

- **Excused absence from classes.** Partial attendance options include missing elective classes to focus on core classes, coming in to school later, or leaving earlier.
- **Lengthened assignment deadlines.** Speed of processing and the ability to handle a full workload are often key constraints. Allow extra time for homework and class projects.
- **Temporary help of a tutor for organizing and prioritizing homework assignments.** Students may have problems planning their studies, including writing papers and preparing for tests. A short meeting with a guidance counselor or an assigned tutor may help students plan out their work.
- **Rest periods during the school day.** Just 30 minutes of rest in the nurse's office or appointed area can help lessen many students' symptoms.
- **Special classroom seating to lessen distraction.** Sitting at the front of the class or away from doors and windows is helpful for students with attention problems and other concussion symptoms.
- **Accommodations for oversensitivity to light or noise.** Many students find themselves unable to endure normal levels of light or noise while healing from concussion. Fluorescent lighting can cause headaches. Students should try to avoid noise from cafeterias, assembly halls, or band rooms.
- **Excused from team sports practices and gym activities.** Avoiding physical exertion should be a priority, especially in the early days after a concussion.

TESTS AND EXAMS

- **Postponing or staggering tests.** Taking tests while still having concussion symptoms often places recovering students at a distinct disadvantage. It also may result in heightening or prolonging symptoms.
- **Excused from certain tests.** Some students are so symptomatic that postponing or staggering tests may not help. In such cases, the most useful step may be to excuse students altogether from tests, specifically in classes where they were performing well before their concussion.
- **Extended test-taking time.** Reduced processing speed is one of the most common post-concussive symptoms. Give students extra time to finish tests.
- **Tape-recorded tests.** Visual scanning or the concentration demands of reading can worsen concussion symptoms. Recorded tests allow students to listen at their own pace, stop and start the tape for each question, and process test questions without the stress of reading.
- **Dictated test answers by tape recorder or scribe.** Due to the visual and concentration demands of writing, some students may better convey their answers to essay questions via dictation.
- **Use of smaller, quieter exam rooms to reduce stimulation and distraction.** During the recovery period, students display some of the traits seen in ADHD. They are more vulnerable to distraction by routine sights and sounds that occur in exam rooms for larger classes. Taking tests with smaller groups or alone may be helpful.