

Eastern Mennonite School

Head Injury and Concussion Protocol

I. EMS is committed to our students' health and safety, therefore this protocol will assist students, families, teachers, coaches, and administrative staff in knowing how to best assist and support a student who has a head injury or who has been diagnosed with a concussion.

II. A **concussion** is a type of traumatic brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. It can be caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head; in which the brain bounces or twists within the skull. Effects from concussions can be serious and can cause long term sequelae if not appropriately managed. All concussions are serious and proper recognition and response should be maintained. Most young people with a concussion will recover quickly and fully; but for some, signs and symptoms can last for days, weeks, or even longer.

Observable signs (reported by adults or students):

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about events
- Answers questions slowly
- Repeats questions
- Can't recall events prior to or after the event
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows behavior or personality changes

Symptoms reported by student:

- Thinking/Remembering- difficulty thinking clearly, difficulty concentrating, feeling sluggish/hazy/foggy
- Emotional- Irritable, sad, more emotional than usual, nervous
- Physical- headache or pressure in head, nausea/vomiting, balance issues, fatigue, blurry or double vision, sensitivity to light/noise, numbness, or does not "feel right"
- Sleep- drowsy, sleeps less or more than usual, has trouble falling asleep (only ask about sleep symptoms if injury occurred day prior)

III. Head Injury

a. **Students:**

- i. If a concerning injury or bump to the head occurs during a school day, parents will be notified immediately. The *CDC Concussion Signs and Symptoms Checklist* will be used to monitor students with reported head injuries that occurred at school. Students and families should consider an examination by licensed medical personnel experienced with assessing for concussions such as the local Emergency Department, the student's family physician, or Sentara Concussion Clinic. If the concerning injury or bump to the head occurs while at home, students should be assessed by a licensed health care provider

experienced with assessing for concussions. A diagnosis of a concussion is final. Recommendations made by a health care provider in regards to physical and academic activity during the school day will be followed by the school. **Parents and guardians are asked to notify the school once a concussion is diagnosed so necessary communication and accommodations within the school can be followed.**

EMES Parents and Guardians: **Please notify the Elementary School Principal (Maria Archer) once a concussion is diagnosed.**

EMMS/ EMHS Parents and Guardians: **Please notify the Front Office once a concussion is diagnosed.**

b. Athletes:

- i. If a head injury occurs during a sporting event, students who present with signs and symptoms of a concussion will be assessed by a Drayer Physical Therapy athletic trainer at the specific sporting event. The Drayer Physical Therapy athletic trainer will notify the Front Office and also the Athletic Director (Andrew Gascho) of a concussion diagnosis, and proper channels of communication will be followed. The Drayer Physical Therapy athletic trainer will observe the athlete through the gradual return to play progression prior to clearing the athlete to full activity. Students and families may wish to be examined by additional medical personnel such as the local ED, family physician, or Sentara Concussion Clinic. Student athletes must be cleared by a medical professional who is experienced in evaluating concussions prior to progressing into the return-to-play protocol. A diagnosis of a concussion is final and the graduated return to play progression will be completed prior to returning to play. **Parents and guardians are asked to notify the Front Office for concussions not diagnosed by a Drayer Physical Therapy athletic trainer so necessary communication and accommodations within the school can be followed.**

IV. Diagnosed Concussion

- a. If a student is diagnosed with a concussion, **at least (1) day of rest at home** is highly recommended. During this period, students should limit screen time (computer, TV, cell phone use), mental exertion, or stimulation through reading and writing. The more rest that occurs after a concussion, the quicker the recovery period. Gradually easing back into reading, screen time, and academic work is most effective. Students should work only to the point where symptoms such as headaches, blurred vision, or dizziness begin, signs that the brain is being overstimulated.
- b. Medical recommendations will be followed and accommodations made to academics as needed. Recommendations related to return to play will be strictly followed.
- c. Students are not permitted to be involved in athletics, Physical Education classes, or extra-curricular physical activity until they have obtained **written permission** from their healthcare

provider, or in the case of Athletes, a Drayer Physical Therapy athletic trainer. However, they may return to school prior to physical activity.

V. How to help students ease back into academics:

- a. Accommodations will be made in the school setting to help support the student in returning slowly to academics. As each situation and student is different, these accommodations will be made on an as needed basis.
- b. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - i. attend half-school days
 - ii. limit reading and screen time
 - iii. use a smaller, quieter space for students to work; alternate space provided for lunch if needed
 - iv. have text read aloud to them
 - v. have pre-printed notes provided or taken by another student
 - vi. modify or delay assignments or homework (limit number of problems, questions, or pages to read)
 - vii. postpone or stagger tests (provide shortened tests, delay tests, or extend time to take tests)
 - viii. allow time for students to visit counselor or quiet office space
 - ix. allow students to switch classes slightly early or late to decrease noise and stimulation during busy times in the hall
 - x. reassurance from faculty that the student will be supported throughout the healing process
- c. An individual student plan for returning to school and academics will be catered to each student after a diagnosed concussion. Such plan will outline student need and necessary accommodations, and be communicated to teachers.

For further questions: Drayer Physical Therapy, family PCP, or the Sentara Concussion Clinic can be contacted.

For more information, we encourage athletes, students, and parents to link to resources on the CDC Heads up website. <https://www.cdc.gov/headsup/youthsports/training/index.html>

Resources: CDC- Concussion, CDC Heads Up, Sentara Concussion Recovery Study, Drayer Physical Therapy, Harrisonburg City Public Schools, Rockingham County Public Schools