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# CALIFORNIA INTERSCHOLASTIC FEDERATION

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## BEST PRACTICES FOLLOWING A CONCUSSION FOR MEDICAL DOCTORS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS

### Returning to Daily Home/Community Activities

Increased rest and limited exertion are important to facilitate the patient's recovery. Physicians should be cautious about allowing patients to return to driving, especially if the patient has problems with attention, processing speed, or reaction time. Patients should also be advised to get adequate sleep at night and to take daytime naps or rest breaks when significant fatigue is experienced. Symptoms typically worsen or re-emerge with exertion. Let any return of a patient's symptoms be the guide to the level of exertion or activity that is safe.

Patients should limit both physical and cognitive exertion accordingly.

- Physical activity includes PE, sports practices, weight-training, running, exercising, heavy lifting, etc.
- Cognitive activity includes heavy concentration or focus, memory, reasoning, reading or writing (e.g., homework, classwork, job-related mental activity)

As symptoms decrease, or as cognitive test results show improvement, patients may return to their regular activities gradually. However, the patient's overall status should continue to be monitored closely.

### Returning to School

Students may require active supports and accommodations in school, which may be gradually decreased as their functioning improves. Inform the student's teacher(s), the school nurse, psychologist/counselor, and administrator of the student's injury, symptoms, and cognitive deficits.

School personnel should be advised to monitor the student for the following signs:

- Increased problems paying attention/concentrating
- Increased problems remembering/learning new information
- Longer time required to complete tasks
- Increase in symptoms (e.g., headache, fatigue) during schoolwork
- Greater irritability, less tolerance for stressors

**Until a full recovery from concussion is achieved, students may need the following supports:**

### School attendance and activities may need to be modified.

While some individuals may be able to attend school without increasing their symptoms, the majority will probably need some modifications depending on the nature of the symptoms. Trial and error may be needed to discover what they can and cannot do.

- If students are unable to attend school for an entire day without symptoms, they may attend for a half day. Some students may only be able to attend for one period, some not at all, due to severe headaches or other symptoms. Frequent breaks with rest periods in the nurse's office may be necessary. Often, alternating a class with a rest period may be helpful. Math causes more symptoms



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in my patients than other subject classes. As recovery proceeds, gradually hours spent in school may be increased.

- Depending on their symptoms, some students may need to be driven to school to avoid walking and should be given elevator passes to avoid stairs. They should not attend gym or exercise classes.
- Workload and homework may need to be reduced. Frequent breaks while doing homework may be helpful. Term papers should be postponed. Pre-printed class notes and tutors may help to relieve the pressure of schoolwork.
- Tests: If there are concentration and memory problems, quizzes, tests, PSAT tests, SAT tests and final exams should be delayed or postponed. If test results are poor, a note to the school should request that the scores be voided. Extra time (un-timed tests) may be necessary initially when test taking is resumed.

## Activities:

- If noise causes increased symptoms, students with concussions should not listen to loud music (especially in cars or on their I-Pods). They should avoid attending dances, parties, music concerts and sports events until the hyperacusis is gone.
- If light causes increased symptoms or students have photophobia they should avoid bright sunlight and exposure to flashing lights (computer games). Sunglasses may be necessary.
- My experience suggests that spinning carnival rides should be avoided while recovering from a concussion.