

ST. CYPRIAN SCHOOL CONCUSSION POLICY

At St. Cyprian School, the safety of our students and student-athletes is the highest priority. For this reason, a Concussion Oversight Team (COT) has been created to ensure that proper concussion protocols are followed. The COT consists of the School Principal, School Administrative Assistant, and Athletic Association members. It is the responsibility of the COT to ensure that all student-athletes and their parents are aware of the school's concussion protocols and sign the Concussion Information Sheet required by the state of Illinois. The COT is also responsible for providing training to all St. Cyprian coaches on the signs and symptoms of concussions and how to respond to a possible concussion.

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of brain injury resulting from a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth. A direct blow to the head is not required to cause a concussion; this type of injury can result from a hit to the body that transmits force to the head. The sudden, forceful movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, stretching or damaging the brain cells and causing chemical changes in the brain. Concussions affect people differently both physically and cognitively. Many students will recover within a few days or weeks and only experience brief symptoms. With a more serious concussion, symptoms can be prolonged and persist for many months or more.

Concussion symptoms can significantly impact a student's ability to learn. Physical symptoms such as headache, dizziness, and visual changes, may inhibit a student's ability to focus and concentrate. Cognitive symptoms may impact the ability of the student to learn, memorize and process information as well as stay on task with assignments and tests. Struggling with schoolwork may actually cause symptoms to increase. Students may experience feelings of frustration, nervousness and/or irritability both as a direct result of concussion and due to resulting academic difficulties. Altered sleep schedules may result in fatigue and drowsiness throughout the day. Inadequate sleep can exacerbate the magnitude of symptoms the student may experience.

Treatment and recovery from a concussion is an individualized process. Caution must be taken not to compare students diagnosed with concussions. Because every brain and every student are different, every concussion is different. Some students may not miss any school and may need relatively few accommodations. Others may endure several months of prolonged symptoms that can significantly affect academic performance and require extensive accommodations at school. The severity of a concussion is measured by how long the symptoms last. Thus, it is not possible to know how severe a concussion is until the student is fully recovered.

Maximizing a student's recovery potential following a concussion depends on timely implementation of two critical components: cognitive rest and physical rest. There is increasing evidence that using a concussed brain to learn may worsen concussion symptoms and prolong recovery. The goal during concussion recovery is to avoid overexerting the brain to the level of triggering or worsening symptoms. Determining the appropriate balance between the amount of cognitive exertion and rest is the hallmark of the student's learning plan and crucial for facilitating recovery. This balance is different for each concussion. Therefore, an individualized plan for returning to learn with accommodations is required, and should be frequently monitored and updated to allow for the student to progress academically as concussion symptoms improve.

ST. CYPRIAN SCHOOL CONCUSSION POLICY

What are the Signs and Symptoms of a Concussion?

The signs and symptoms of a concussion can show up right after an injury or may not appear or be noticed until hours or days later. Be alert for the following. Watch for changes in how the student is acting or feeling or if the symptoms are getting worse.

SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY STUDENT

EMOTIONAL:

- Irritable
- Sad
- More emotional than usual
- Nervous

THINKING REMEMBERING:

- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Difficulty concentrating/remembering
- Feeling slowed down
- Feeling hazy, foggy or sluggish

SLEEP

- Drowsy
- Sleeps less than usual
- Sleeps more than usual
- Trouble falling asleep

PHYSICAL

- Headache or pressure in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Fatigue or tired
- Blurry or double vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Does not feel right

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Is confused about events
- Answers questions slowly
- Repeats questions
- Can't recall events prior to the hit/fall
- Can't recall events after the hit/fall
- Loses consciousness even briefly
- Personality or behavior changes
- Forgets class schedule or assignments

DANGER SIGNS

Be alert for symptoms that worsen over time. A student should be seen in the emergency department right away if she/he has:

- Repeated vomiting or nausea
- Drowsiness or cannot be awoken
- A headache that gets worse
- Weakness, numbness or decrease in coordination
- Slurred speech
- Increase confusion, restlessness or agitation
- Seizure
- Loss of consciousness- even brief
- Unequal pupils

SIGNS OBSERVED BY SCHOOL/ATHLETIC STAFF

How Can a Concussion Affect School Performance?

Slower processing speed
Lapses in short term memory
Reduced/impaired concentration
Slower to learn new concepts
Shorter attention span
More difficulty planning, organizing and completing assignments

ST. CYPRIAN SCHOOL CONCUSSION POLICY

Slower reading
Difficulty with reading comprehension

St. Cyprian School Return to Learn Guidelines

A student with a concussion who is participating in an interscholastic sport should be evaluated by a licensed healthcare professional that has experience managing concussions for guidance about when it's safe to return to school as well as recommended appropriate levels of cognitive and physical activity throughout the recovery process. St. Cyprian School does not have a nurse on staff. Therefore, a student suffering from a concussion should consult his/her family doctor to receive guidance before returning to school or to athletic activity. **A doctor's note must be presented to the school office, outlining any needed accommodations and approving the student's return to school, before the child returns to the classroom.**

St. Cyprian School Return To Play Guidelines

Any student-athlete who exhibits signs, symptoms, or behaviors consistent with a concussion (including but not limited to loss of consciousness, headache, dizziness, confusion, or balance problems) shall be immediately removed from the contest and shall not return to play (RTP) until the student-athlete has provided his or her school with written clearance from a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches in Illinois or a certified Athletic Trainer working in conjunction with a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches in Illinois.

Coaches will be responsible for communicating the signs and symptoms of concussions to their student-athletes. Coaches can act as a second party to identify student-athletes with a possible concussion. When a student-athlete is suspected of receiving a concussion or displays or reports symptoms such as headache, nausea, balance problems or dizziness, double or blurred vision, sensitivity to light or noise, feeling sluggish, feeling foggy or groggy, concentration or memory problems, or confusion, the following steps should be followed:

1. The student-athlete will be immediately removed from sport activities, and parents will be notified of the suspected concussion. The student-athlete will not be left alone. The coach will recommend that parents take the student-athlete to see the family physician or visit the emergency room.
2. A student-athlete must be symptom-free for 24 hours **AND** have written consent from a physician in order to return to athletics. Upon the student-athlete's return, all guidelines and recommendations given by the doctor will be followed to ensure that proper rest time has been given.
3. When returning to athletics, a student-athlete will begin with light physical activity and work his/her way back to 100% over the course of a week or longer, according to the physician's instructions and guidance.