

Dear Faculty,

Health Services sees many students each year diagnosed with a concussion. A concussion can have a significant impact on students' academic performance.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Concussion is a type of brain injury that can result from a direct hit to the head or a force that shakes the neck and head. Most often our students' concussions do not result from athletic participation but rather everyday activities. You do not need to lose consciousness to develop a concussion. The diagnosis of concussion is based on the history of an event, the patient's symptoms, and their physical exam. There is no imaging or specific test that can show a concussion. Symptoms are the result of the brain not being able to function at its typical speed or maximum capacity. People experience various symptoms that begin immediately, or hours or days after injury.

A concussion may result in symptoms that fall into four main categories:

- Migraine-like symptoms (headache, nausea, light and/or noise sensitivity)
- Cognitive symptoms (confusion, memory problems, concentration problems, impaired processing speed)
- Emotional symptoms (feeling down or depressed, anxious, irritable or tearful)
- Vestibular symptoms (balance problems, dizziness)

The severity and course of symptoms are highly variable. Most people fully recover within 7–14 days, but occasionally it can take a few weeks to recover. Known risk factors (i.e., ADHD, pre-existing learning or processing disorders, mental health diagnoses, previous history of concussion) may predict students who will have a longer course, however other factors (i.e., cause of the concussion) have little predictive value.

## ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

While symptomatic, it is important for students to have adequate cognitive rest followed by a gradual increase in cognitive activities as tolerated. Based on guidelines, to give students the best chance of recovering quickly, students will be advised to avoid anything more than activities of daily living (ADLs) for the first 24-48 hours after their initial injury. The goal thereafter is to gradually reintroduce cognitive activity/work along with low intensity physical activity followed by return to sport/more intense physical activity, if applicable. Progression will be based on the degree of the student's symptoms. Students will be given detailed information, both written and verbally, regarding this progression.

**You play a key role in ensuring the successful recovery of your student. By allowing for academic accommodations, you will help reduce the stress placed on the brain to promote recovery.**

The following are recommended *temporary* academic accommodations that may help students to recover while participating as able:

- Excuse student from class for the first several days until acute concussion symptoms improve
- Allow students to wear sunglasses/hats in class and to sit at a distance to reduce light/sound exposure
- Allow students to step out during class for a break then return (sometimes as often as every 10-20 minutes)
- Allow more time to complete class work
- Provide written instructions for the student



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- Allow participation in parts of class that are most comfortable (i.e. attend and listen but do not take notes or participate in discussion)
- Assist students to get notes from a classmate and/or allow audio or video recording of lecture
- Access to class over zoom to allow patient to listen but not “watch”
- Reschedule quizzes or tests or allow extended time for testing
- Expect that students may have health appointments at least once per week and as frequently as every few days. Students will have regular visits with Health Services and also may require visits with Counseling Services, or outside providers such as specialists, physical therapists, etc. Every effort will be made to have these appointments outside of class time but may not always be possible.

### **ROLE OF STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICES**

Students will be advised to contact you directly and keep you informed at least on a weekly basis. Students can access academic support through Student Academic Services. This may include:

- Quiet, lighting-adjustable work or test taking space
- Assistance with time management, identifying smaller tasks in larger projects
- Counseling on academic options such as withdrawal

If you have questions or concerns, please call Student Academic Services at 518-580-8150.