



Concussions at School: Q & A

Q. Doctor claims no concussion. Can a student resume normal physical activity if their own doctor writes they did not have a concussion, even though school personnel witnessed signs of possible concussion after an injury (e.g., appeared dazed or felt nauseated)?

A. No, do not allow student to resume normal physical activities even if the student feels fine. No competition for at least 7 days. Follow district's gradual introduction to physical activity outlined on the CIF "Return to Play" form.

Q. When is Day 1 for "Return to Play"? Is it the day the student sees their doctor (and got their "Return to Play" form signed)? Or is the day that concussion occurred?

A. It is the day *of the concussion* that starts the countdown. 'Day 1' is the day after the concussion. Doctors may delay the start of physical activity further than Day 2 or 3, if they specify that on the form or any other document). Remember: the first 2 days on the "Return to Play" protocol we recommend no activity more vigorous than regular walking, before you can move successfully to 'Day 3' activities on the protocol. But some movement, such as walking, is encouraged.

Q. Can a student with headache or other post-concussion symptoms return to play (e.g., P.E. or Athletics)?

A. Yes, but only 48 hours after the concussion occurred and if it is specifically cleared by the child's doctor to do so, despite symptoms. Even then, that level of physical activity (starting with stage 2) must not worsen symptoms or cause any additional symptoms, or that activity must be ceased. The latest evidence shows that youth do better if they engage in some physical activity early in the process, even before all post-concussive symptoms have resolved. Students with post-concussive symptoms, even symptoms that do not worsen when active, *cannot* progress to any contact activity (Step 5 on CDC and school district "Return to Play" form; Step III on CIF's Return to Play form) and these students cannot compete.

Q. Symptoms with Activity. If symptoms worsen or new symptoms appear during a stage of the "Return to Play", when does activity/play resume?

A. The student must return to the previously successful (no new symptoms or no worsening of symptoms) stage again, before trying the unsuccessful stage again. (e.g. if failed Step II-B, then back to Step II-A the next day, and to Step II-B following day)

Q. Progressing on "Return to Play" on weekends. Do these days count? When stages of the "Return to Play" protocol are on weekends (e.g., day 3 and day 4 are Saturday and Sunday), do I resume where I left off (i.e., start day 3 activities on Monday)? Or are weekends valid days of progression (e.g., Monday would be day 5)?

A. If student and parent/guardian verify student's participation in stepped-up physical activities over weekend days resulted in no new or worsening symptoms, then accept their reports and move forward by two days (i.e., Monday would be day 5). Move forward by only one day on Monday if student's weekend activity level only progressed one day.

Q. Progressing on "Return to Play" on school days. Who performs the assessment, and when is it done?

A. Whenever possible, it is best to assess students soon after their stepped-up activity. For example, a nurse asking questions immediately after observing a student at PE; or an athletic trainer asking questions soon after observing a student in sport are both preferable

to asking the student how they felt several hours after the stepped-up activity occurred. School staff who are trained to perform the assessment may do so.

Q. Students from other schools. Should we report concussions of students registered at other schools and districts?

A. Yes, you are responsible for completing all forms related to witnessing a concussion for *any* student. Try to get one copy of that form to the student's own school on the next possible school day.

Q. Students who don't see a doctor. Can a student with signs/symptoms of concussion (i) return to school and (ii) play in a competition, even if he/she has never seen a doctor?

A(i). Yes. But for these students, follow the district's "Return to Learn" and "Return to Play" guidelines, which align with the CIF. If the student comes to school the first day instead of staying home and no parent picks him/her up, encourage rest in the health office rather than class. If they do well, they can return to class on Day 2, with instructions to the teacher to expect very little and to report any concerning symptoms/signs to health office.

A(ii) If an athlete progresses through the "Return to Play" and is ready for limited contact practice or full practice for non-contact sports (equivalent to stage 6 in the CIR Return to Play protocol, 2025), but there is no doctor signature, the student should not progress to this stage. Reach your school Athletic Trainer, Athletic Director, or the Nursing and Wellness Office for guidance if a student never sees a doctor for many weeks and you suspect that student could be ready to progress towards full contact and/or competition.



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