

Identification of a Suspected Concussion

This section is intended to assist school boards with their requirement to establish processes for the identification of a suspected concussion. (Refer to [School Board Policies on Concussion \(PPM158\)](#) for the specific policy requirements.)

Suspected Concussion-related Incident (Observed/Reported):

A concussion-related incident may be caused by a jarring impact to the head, face, neck or body, with an impulsive force transmitted to the head, that causes the brain to move rapidly within the skull (Parachute, 2024).

Initial Response

When a concussion-related incident is observed/reported:

- **Stop the activity and immediately and safely remove the student from participation .**
 - The student should not return to physical activity that day— even if they state that they are feeling better.
 - In some cases, the student may return to learning, depending on the presence of visible clues (signs) and/or symptoms.
- **Initiate the school's Emergency First Aid Response (e.g., basic principles of first aid).**
 - If there has been any loss of consciousness:
 - Assume there is a possible neck injury and do not move the student.
 - If the student regains consciousness, encourage them to remain calm and to lie still.

Using the [Sample Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion](#) complete the following steps:

- **Step 1 - Check for Red Flags**

- **Step 2 - If no Red Flags - Check for Visible Clues (Signs), Symptoms, and Ask the Student the Orientation/Awareness Questions**
- **Step 3 - Monitor Student for up to 48-hours (both at home and at school)** **

Step 1 - Check for Red Flags

If no red flags are observed and/or reported, go to **step 2**

If any red flags are observed and/or reported:

Role of teacher/supervisor/coach:

- Call 911.
- Stay with the student until Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrive. During this time:
 - Monitor and document any changes in red flags.
 - Do not administer medication, unless the student requires medication for a medical condition (e.g., insulin for diabetes, inhaler for asthma).
 - When EMS arrives, provide them with information regarding the red flags observed and/or reported and any changes that may have occurred since the incident.
- Contact parents/guardians to provide information about:
 - the incident and that the student was removed from the activity,
 - that EMS have been contacted,
 - the name and location of the hospital where the student has been taken, and
 - the relevant school forms (e.g., **Sample Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion, Suspected Concussion: Information for Parents/Guardians**, and **Sample Medical Assessment and Monitoring Form**).
- Inform principal/designate about:
 - the incident, the student involved, and that the student was removed from the activity;

- that EMS have been contacted;
- the status of communication with parents/guardians;
- the name and location of the hospital where the student has been taken; and
- any other relevant information.

Role of principal/designate:

After the incident:

- Inform teachers who have regular contact with the student:
 - about the incident and that the student is suspected of having a concussion and/or other serious injury, and
 - that the student should not participate in any school activities until further notice
- Complete appropriate school board reporting processes:
 - document information specific to the concussion-related incident.

After parents/guardians share results of medical assessment:

- **If a concussion is diagnosed:** student begins a medically supervised, individualized, and gradual Return to Learn and Return to Physical Activity Plan – refer to: [Sample Return to School Plan - Stages 1 to 3 Form](#).
- **If a concussion is not diagnosed:** student may resume regular participation in school activities (including learning and physical activity).

Step 2 - If no Red Flags - Check for Visible Clues (Signs), Symptoms, and Ask the Student the Orientation/Awareness Questions

If there are no visible clues (signs) or symptoms and all orientation/awareness questions were answered correctly, go to [step 3](#).

If there are any visible cues (signs), symptoms and/or any of the orientation/awareness questions were answered incorrectly:

Role of teacher/supervisor/coach:

- Contact parents/guardians to provide information about:
 - the incident, that the student was removed from the activity, and that the student needs to be picked up and taken for a medical assessment as soon as possible.
- Remain with the student until parents/guardians (or emergency contact) arrives. During this time:
 - Monitor and document any changes in visible clues (signs) and/or symptoms. (Refer to [**Sample Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion**](#))
 - Do not administer medication unless the student requires medication for a medical condition (e.g., insulin for diabetes, inhaler for asthma).
 - Ensure that the student does not:
 - leave the premises without parents/guardians (or emergency contact) supervision.
 - drive a motor vehicle until they receive medical clearance by a medical doctor or a nurse practitioner.
- Inform parents/guardians (or emergency contact) when they arrive about:
 - the suspected concussion-related incident, and
 - the relevant school board forms needed for follow-up. This may include: [**Sample Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion**](#), [**Suspected Concussion: Information for Parents/Guardians**](#), and [**Sample Medical Assessment and Monitoring Form**](#)).
- Inform principal/designate about:
 - the incident, the student involved, and that the student was removed from the activity;
 - the status of parents/guardians communication; and
 - any other relevant information.

Role of principal/designate:

After the incident:

- Inform teachers/supervisors/coaches who have regular contact with the student:
 - about the suspected concussion, and
 - that the student should not participate in school-related activities until further notice.
- Complete appropriate school board reporting processes.
 - Document information specific to the concussion-related incident.

After parents/guardians share information from the medical assessment:

- **If a concussion has been diagnosed:** student begins a medically supervised, individualized, and gradual Return to Learn and Return to Physical Activity Plan. (Refer to school board trackers or use the [Sample Return to School Plan – Stages 1 to 3 Form](#))
- **If a concussion has not been diagnosed:** student may resume regular participation in school activities (including learning and physical activity).

Step 3 - Monitor Student for up to 48-hours (both at home and at school)

as visible clues (signs) and symptoms can occur hours or days after the incident.

A concussion-related incident has occurred where no red flags, visual clues (signs) or symptoms of a suspected concussion were observed and/ or reported, and the student answered all the orientation/awareness questions correctly.

Role of teacher/supervisor/coach:

- Inform parents/guardians (or emergency contact) about:
 - the suspected concussion-related incident, that the student was removed from the activity, and should be monitored for 48-hours (at home and at school);
 - school attendance: the student is encouraged to continue attending school (for learning); however, physical activity is not permitted for a minimum of 24-hours;
 - their roles and responsibilities: refer to school board tools or use [Suspected Concussion: Information for Parents/Guardians](#).

- Inform principal/designate about:
 - the suspected concussion-related incident and the student involved,
 - the status of communication with parents/guardians,
 - any other relevant information.
- Monitor student while at school (during the initial 48-hour period).
 - To support student monitoring, refer to school board tools or use [Sample Tool to Identify a Suspected Concussion](#) and [Sample Medical Assessment and Monitoring Form](#)).

Role of principal/designate:

After the incident:

- Inform teachers who have regular contact with the student about:
 - the suspected concussion;
 - the status of the student's attendance at school (e.g., sent home, still in class);
 - that the student should not participate in physical activity until further notice;
 - that the student should be monitored for any visual cues (signs) and/or symptoms of a concussion for 48 hours.
- Complete appropriate school board reporting processes.
 - Document information specific to the concussion-related incident.

After parents/guardians communication regarding the 48-hour monitoring:

- If, during the 48-hour monitoring period:
 - red flags emerge (refer to [Step 1](#))
 - visible clues (signs) and/or symptoms emerge (refer to [Step 2](#))
 - no visible clues (signs) and/or symptoms emerge—the student may resume regular physical activities.

Reference

Parachute. (2024). Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport, 2nd edition. Retrieved from <https://parachute.ca/en/professional-resource/concussion-collection/canadian-guideline-on-concussion-in-sport/>