

# 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/>