



Brain Injury Association of Vermont

1 Derby Lane, Suite 2, Waterbury, VT 05676 ♦ Toll-Free Help-line: 877-856-1772

Fax: 802-244-4005 ♦ email: support@biavt.org ♦ Web Page: www.biavt.org

Concussion Return to Learn Tips for Hybrid/Remote Learning for Parents/Guardians

Unfortunately, managing a concussion does not stop during a nationwide COVID-19 pandemic and in a school year where hybrid and remote learning is taking place. How can you as a parent/guardian help your student manage concussion symptoms during online learning when screens, lights and eye strain can trigger symptoms? Here are some tips and modifications to help your student manage a concussion in virtual situations. Also refer to [Return to Learn Protocol on BIAVT's website](#)

Symptom-Limited Activity

Gone are the days of sitting in a dark room and doing nothing after a concussion. Guidelines now support modified activities that don't provoke significant spikes in symptoms. It's still important to take it easy for a few days (no more than 2-3 days), and it's okay to participate in activities such as going for a walk, watching TV, answering emails and doing school work in a symptom-limited way. As long as student's pace themselves well and stop when symptoms are provoked and before they significantly worsen.

For example, if a student starts out on a walk with a headache that is a 2 out of 10, they should take a break when the headache goes to a 4 out of 10. It's important to let symptoms recover back to the 2 out of 10, and then return to that activity. This is a rest-recovery-repeat type of pattern

Stay Active

Exercise is an effective strategy in not only managing symptoms but in promoting recovery from a concussion. When a student feels up to it, they can start slow with a couple of light walks per day starting at 5-10 mins and increasing gradually to 20-30 mins in length, avoiding any activity that significantly worsens symptoms or adds a risk of repeat head injury. Advancing to moderate levels of activity as tolerated can follow.

Eat Healthy

It is important to make sure that the student is helping recovery with a healthy diet, not skipping meals, and paying attention to hydration. Free breakfast and lunches for hybrid/remote students are available every week.

Mental Health

A concussion on top of an already anxiety provoking pandemic can add to the worsening of concussion symptoms. Anxiety and depression can occur after a concussion so it is important to be aware of these symptoms. There are strategies a student can do at home to improve overall mental well-being even during social distancing. Please contact your student's school counselor, school nurse or case manager for support. You can also reach out to your student's primary care physician for resources.

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Get Good Sleep

It is common to have some variation of sleep disturbance including insomnia, fatigue and daytime sleepiness with a concussion. Some tips include keeping a consistent sleep and daytime schedule, minimizing daytime napping, and making the bedroom dark and cool without electronics.

Supporting Academic Classwork

Your student may have difficulty with visual scanning, visual attention and visual memory along with cognitive fatigue. Some modifications to try:

- Start out having the student spending 15 mins doing classwork on the computer at a time gradually increasing the time as long as symptoms do not worsen.
- If 15 or 20 mins is all the student can manage without increasing symptoms then stay at this level for another day before trying to increase the time.
- Keep a consistent school routine at home. Keep schedule the same as much as possible with frequent breaks as needed.
- The larger the screen the better - Try larger font size of 16-18
- Adjust the computer display - change screen color (try black background with white print)
- Consider blue-blocking glasses to reduce screen glare
- Reduce visual screen clutter - use programs like Immersive Reader, Safari Reader, or Mercury Reader for Chrome
- Build in "Brain Breaks" throughout the day and away from the screen. Take frequent eye breaks. It's okay to gaze away from the screen every few minutes
- Change where the student sits throughout the day - all chairs are not the same. Watch out for poor posture during online learning. Head and neck positions are key while sitting for extended periods of time.
- Encourage your student to get up and move around. Movement is important.
- Consider using clock apps to help stay on a consistent schedule
- Rest but don't nap
- Consider noise cancelling headphones to block out background noise.
- Students can turn off their own video when live streaming class or meeting with a teacher.

Other Technology Modifications Available on Student Chromebooks - contact the school if you need help with this.

- Speech to text and text to speech - try and limit screen time to editing classwork.
- Word prediction software
- Concept mapping software

Check in Regularly with School Nurse

If your student is ready for in school hybrid learning, the student should stop by the Health Office when they arrive for school and talk with a nurse. Communication is important for us to help support your student during their recovery. The school health office also expects that you have contacted your

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student's primary care physician regarding their head injury. Please share any instruction/information from the physician with the school Health Office.

References: [Brain Injury Association of Vermont](#) [Children's Hospital of Philadelphia](#)

[BrainSteps](#) [CDC Brain Injury and Concussion](#)

*For additional assistance and resources, please contact the Brain Injury Association of Vermont at 802-244-6850 option 3, visit our website at biavt.org/resources or email support@biavt.org

This information is brought to you by the Concussion Task Force, a standing committee with the Brain Injury Association of Vermont (BIAVT).

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