

Concussion & Vision: A Parent's Quick Guide

What to expect visually after your child's concussion · and how to help at home

Why vision matters after a concussion

Most of the brain is involved in vision in some way. After a concussion, the systems that control eye teaming, focusing, tracking, and tolerance of light and motion often take longer to recover than the initial headache. Many 'I just can't focus in class' complaints are really visual recovery still in progress.

Common visual symptoms in the weeks after

- Words that blur, double, or 'move' when reading
- Trouble keeping place on a page or copying from the board
- Headache, eye strain, or nausea within minutes of reading or screens
- Sensitivity to fluorescent lights, sunlight, or bright screens
- Dizziness in busy places: hallways, stores, car rides, gym
- Fatigue that hits hard after school even on 'easy' days

What helps at home

- Protect sleep. The brain does most of its repair overnight - keep a steady bedtime and a dark, cool room.
- Hydrate and eat regularly. Skipped meals amplify headache and dizziness.
- Screens in short blocks with breaks BEFORE symptoms appear, not after.
- Lower visual load: dim lights, matte surfaces, one task at a time.
- Sunglasses or a brimmed hat outside; a soft light lamp instead of overheads inside.
- Gentle movement (walks) as tolerated - avoid busy, visually stimulating environments early on.

What helps at school

- Ask for a written return-to-learn plan, updated as symptoms change.
- Shortened day, then partial classes, then full schedule - not all at once.
- Preferential seating, reduced screen time, and permission for rest breaks.
- Audio versions of reading, extended time, and oral responses when needed.
- A quiet recovery space (nurse, counselor, or resource room) available all day.
- Weekly symptom check-in between home, teacher, and school nurse or OT.

When to ask for more help

- Symptoms lasting longer than your medical provider expected - go back for reassessment.
- Reading, tracking, or focusing problems that outlast the headache - ask about a referral to a developmental optometrist.
- Mood, sleep, or school performance changes that are not improving - loop in the school OT, counselor, and 504/IEP team.
- Any 'red flags' from your medical team - follow their instructions immediately.

Bring this page with you

Print this and share it with your child's teacher, nurse, and OT. When the adults around

your child work from the same plan, recovery goes smoother and school stress goes down.

This guide is educational, not medical advice. Always follow the plan from your child's medical provider. Share this guide with your child's teacher, school nurse, and OT so everyone works from the same page.