

Excessive mental challenge can delay concussion recovery

8 September 2016, by Dipali Pathak

Just like the body needs time to rest and heal from an injury, the same is true for the brain. In fact, pushing the brain too quickly after a concussion can potentially delay healing, according to an expert at Baylor College of Medicine.

"Just as we have concussion guidelines for sports, where you slowly increase activity and pull back if you have any problems, the same approach should be taken for schoolwork or any other type of learning activity," said Dr. Craig DiTommaso, assistant professor of [physical medicine](#) and rehabilitation at Baylor.

For students returning to school after a concussion, it is important to allow them to do their schoolwork at an appropriate level and increase slowly back to their previous level without overstressing the brain, according to DiTommaso.

"It's still under investigation, but it looks like pushing the brain too fast and too hard after a concussion can actually delay the healing," he said.

DiTommaso suggests giving the brain time to rest and heal after a concussion, but also trying to resume normal activities as much as possible. Once normal activities are tolerable, then resume a manageable amount of schoolwork and athletic activity.

Each concussion is different, and every brain and [brain injury](#) is different, so symptoms may vary for each person. In general, signs such as headaches, problems with concentration and dizziness can indicate that the patient is trying to recover too quickly and should consider talking to a physician with expertise in brain injuries.

"Any headache or dizziness that is different than before a concussion or [brain](#) injury is something that needs to be looked in to," said DiTommaso.

He suggested that parents and teachers should be aware that a student may need to have some allowances after suffering from a concussion – they may need to rest at times.

In fact, many states, including Texas, require by law that a student recovering from a [concussion](#) have an individualized education program in which the school has to make accommodations as the student transitions back to school. This helps students gradually work back up to their previous level of scholastic function.

Depending on the symptoms, physicians can help with various aspects of a gradual recovery, including:

- Setting guidelines on school and athletic activity
- Addressing concentration issues if limiting schoolwork
- Balance training if dizziness limits progress
- Prescribing specific headache medications or other interventions to decrease the frequency or intensity of headaches

DiTommaso noted that this also applies to adults who suffer from concussions and a graduated return to work program is just as important for them.

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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