



C.S. Mott Children's Hospital
National Poll
 on Children's Health



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 C.S. Mott Children's Hospital

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Report Highlights

Half of parents of middle- and high-school students report some concussion education.

Watching a video or live presentation helps parents feel more confident about managing a concussion.

Signing a waiver form, without additional concussion education, is rated by parents as not useful.

Contact us

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, and the University of Michigan Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Unit.

Head Smart? Parents Get Confidence Boost from Concussion Education

With a growing body of evidence about risk of concussions in children, many schools and athletic programs have begun to provide parent education about what to do when a child gets a concussion. To learn more about parents' perspectives on concussion education, the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health surveyed parents of children 10 to 17 years old.

Participation in Concussion Education

About half of parents report participation in some type of concussion education:

- 23% have read a brochure or online information
- 17% have watched a video or attended a presentation
- 11% have signed a waiver form, with no other educational component
- 49% report no concussion education at all

Concussion education is more common among parents of children who play sports compared to non-sports parents (58% vs 31%).


In rating the benefits of the concussion education, 63% of parents who watched a video or presentations and 41% of parents who read a brochure or online information rate it as very useful. In contrast, only 11% of parents whose only concussion education was signing a waiver form feel it was very useful.

Education Breeds Confidence

The format of concussion education is linked to parents' self-confidence in their ability to make decisions if their child suffers a concussion in the future (Figure). Parents who watched a video or presentation, and those who read a brochure or information sheet, feel more confident than those who only signed a waiver form with regard to checking if their child's symptoms were getting better, and deciding when the child could return to school and other full activities.

Figure 1. **Parent confidence in decision-making if child has a concussion by type of education**

Proportion of parents who are very confident



| | Type of education about concussions | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| | Video/presentation | Brochure/online info | Waiver only |
| Checking if symptoms are getting better | 73% | 68% | 53% |
| Allowing child to return to school | 67% | 61% | 44% |
| Allowing child to return to full activity | 61% | 53% | 40% |

Source: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health, 2014

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by GfK Custom Research, LLC (GfK), for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital via a method used in many published studies. The survey was administered in March 2014 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults age 18 and older from GfK's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. Responses from parents with a child age 10-17 (n=912) were used for this report. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 53% among the panel members contacted to participate. The margin of error is ± 3 to 4 percentage points and higher among subgroups.

Implications

The CDC estimates that each year, nearly 175,000 children are treated in US emergency rooms for concussions related to sports or recreational activities, including bicycling, football, playground activities, basketball and soccer. As more is known about the risks associated with concussions—including the dangers of repeated concussions—many schools and athletic associations are working to educate coaches, school staff and parents.

Parent education around concussions includes knowing when to seek medical attention, monitoring the child's symptoms, and limiting physical activity until symptoms have subsided. Recently, attention has focused on limiting homework and other mental activities to allow the brain to heal. Parents play a key role in deciding when a child returns to school and extracurricular activities, and concussion education can assist them in making good decisions.

In this poll, about half of parents of children in middle or high school report engaging in some sort of concussion education through the school and/or a sports team. The higher rate of concussion education for parents whose children play sports indicates that athletic programs are reaching many parents with information about recognizing and managing concussions. Still, more than one third of parents of middle and high school athletes do not receive any concussion education, which indicates room for improvement.

A unique finding in this poll is the relationship between the format of concussion education and parents' self-confidence in making decisions if their child has a concussion. The format most likely to be rated as very useful and to boost self-confidence is hearing someone talk about concussions, in a video or a live presentation, followed by reading a brochure or information sheet. Each format offers benefits: a video can meet the needs of parents with limited reading ability; a live presentation allows parents to ask questions about whether the school monitors concussion symptoms; and an information sheet or brochure can be kept at home as a reference guide for the future.

The least useful format for parent education around concussion is signing a waiver only. While many waiver forms contain important information, if parents view it as just another form to sign, they may skip over that content and just focus on the required signature. Moreover, if the waiver is done online or turned in to the school, parents may be left without information at home to guide them in the event of a future concussion.

The key message from this poll is that while many parents are receiving concussion education from schools and athletic programs, further efforts are needed to reach all parents. In addition, schools and athletic programs should consider the format for concussion education, as some are more useful to parents than others. If waiver forms are required, there should be consideration given to having multiple educational formats, to ensure that parents "hear" the concussion information rather than focusing on the required signature.

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