



Head Injury & Concussion Patient Information

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You have suffered a head injury or concussion. A concussion is a traumatic brain injury causing a change in mental status that sometimes involves loss of consciousness or amnesia (difficulty with memory). Concussions can cause symptoms like headache, nausea, or dizziness, physical signs such as unsteadiness or balance problems, and impaired brain function with confusion, difficulty concentrating or behavior changes.

Over 80% of concussion symptoms resolve in 7-10 days, but children and adolescents typically take longer to heal. After one concussion, you are at a higher risk of sustaining another and may take longer to recover. People with history of mood disorders (e.g. anxiety, depression & ADHD) may also take longer to heal.

Stay with a reliable relative or friend for the first 24 hours after your injury.

Warning Signs to Seek Immediate Help (Call 911, go to ER or call a doctor):

- **Any worsening symptoms**
- Inability to wake up
- Severe or worsening headache despite Tylenol (Acetaminophen)
- Increased confusion, trouble thinking clearly or repeating words/sentences
- Worsening unsteadiness (balance problems or difficulty walking)
- Seizure (convulsion)
- Significant change in vision or double vision; problems talking or hearing
- Repeated vomiting (more than once)
- Fever or stiff neck (cannot bend chin to chest)
- Weakness or numbness involving any part of the body
- Acting abnormal (very irritable or change in personality)
- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- Any other significant symptoms that you feel require medical attention

Home care:

- Take medication as recommended by your doctor.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is the preferred pain medicine after a concussion.
- Avoid all NSAID medications (e.g. Ibuprofen, Motrin or Aleve) or Aspirin as they can cause bleeding.
- Avoid drinking alcohol, taking illicit drugs, sleeping pills or other substances that change your thinking and/or might worsen your symptoms.
- Eat a well-balanced diet.
- You do not need to wake up a person with a concussion. Sleep helps them heal.
- Avoid activities that worsen symptoms or increase your chance of hitting your head again.
- For children: Be their advocate! Make sure kids eat healthy and have a regular sleep schedule. Avoid activities that put them at risk of hitting their head (e.g. skiing, sledding, biking or playground climbing)
- **Rest your Body:** No exercise, skiing, snowboarding, sports or any other activities that increase your heart rate or worsen symptoms until cleared by a physician. Resume normal daily activities slowly as tolerated after symptoms resolve.
 - Follow "Return to Activity/Sport" guidelines (see Page 2).

- **Rest your Brain:** You may need to modify school/work attendance/activities until symptoms resolve. Avoid text messaging, video games, and prolonged time in front of a computer or television.
Discuss with your doctor whether driving is safe.
 - o Follow “Return to Learn/Work” guidelines (see below).

Return to Activity/Sport/Learn/Work Guidelines:

The key to initial recovery is mental/physical rest and to avoid activities that increase your risk of another concussion. The injured person should not return to a sport or exercise on the same day of a concussion. Medical clearance may be required prior to starting exercise/sport. For students, no PE classes, no physical activity at recess, sports practices or games. When symptoms have resolved at rest, you will follow a stepwise return to activity/work/school program. There should be at least 24hrs for each stage. If symptoms recur at any stage, the patient should return to the preceding stage until symptom free.

Return to Activity/Sport:

1. Physical rest until all symptoms have resolved.
2. Light exercise (e.g. stationary cycle, brisk walking).
3. Sport-specific exercise (e.g. ski drills, jogging, throwing ball).
4. Non-contact training drills (start light-resistance training).
5. Full-contact training. **May require medical clearance for school.**
6. Return to competition (game play).

Return to Learn/Work:

1. Mental rest (avoid school, work, homework, tests, projects & “screen time”).
2. Light mental activity (e.g. 10 min. intervals of work).
3. Sustained mental activity (e.g. 20 min intervals of work).
4. Limited activity in school/work (e.g. 1-2 hours per day & slowly advance).
5. Full Day. **May require medical clearance** (with minor accommodations).

Return to work/school without restrictions Post-Concussion Syndrome

Sometimes after a minor head injury, people notice new or long-lasting signs and symptoms of a concussion (see below). Talk to your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms for weeks to months.

- Difficulty concentrating; feeling mentally foggy.
- Difficulty learning and memory problems.
- Vision changes.
- Headaches, especially with stress or physical activity.
- Mood changes (irritability, sadness, nervousness, more emotional).
- Increased sensitivity to noise or light.
- Nausea.
- Unusual fatigue; feeling tired; drowsiness or change in sleep patterns.
- Difficulty in relationships with other people.
- Decreased interest in sex.
- Increased susceptibility to alcohol (becoming drunk more easily).
- Dizziness or balance problems.
- Any other concerning symptoms

For more information, we recommend that you view Dr. Evans video presentation explaining concussions:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_55YmbIG9YM

References:

www.cjsportmed.com; Clin/Sport Med/ 2009; 19:185-200); Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport 3rd International Conference on Concussion in Sport. (v3.10)
<http://bjsm.bmj.com>; Jan. 29, 2017. American Medical Society for Sports Medicine Position Statement: Concussion in Sport.