



Head Injury & Concussion Patient Information

Truckee Tahoe Medical Group (530) 581-8864

You have suffered a head injury or concussion. Either injury may get worse and you must contact us or go to the ER if you have any worsening signs or symptoms. You should stay with a reliable friend or relative for at least the first 24 hours after your injury.

Warning Signs to Seek Immediate Help:

(Call 911, go to the nearest Emergency Department, or see your doctor ASAP.)

- **Any worsening symptoms**
- Inability to wake up
- Severe or worsening headache
- Increased confusion or trouble thinking clearly
- Worsening unsteadiness (balance problems or difficulty walking)
- Seizure (convulsion)
- Change in vision or double vision; problems talking or difficulty hearing
- Repeated vomiting
- Fever or stiff neck (cannot bend chin to chest)
- Weakness or numbness involving any part of the body
- Irritability or change in personality (not acting normally)

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury with a change in mental status that may or may not involve loss of consciousness or amnesia (difficulty with memory). Concussions can cause symptoms (such as headache, nausea, or dizziness), physical signs (such as unsteadiness or balance problems) and impaired brain function (confusion, difficulty concentrating or behavior changes).

Most concussions resolve in 7-10 days, but in some cases they may last longer. Concussions in children and adolescents take longer to resolve. Athletes should not return to sports until all of their symptoms are resolved and their brain function (cognition) and balance returns to normal both at rest and with exertion.

Home Care

- Take medication as recommended by your doctor.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) is the preferred medicine for pain after the injury.
- Avoid drinking alcohol or taking illicit drugs, sleeping pills, or other substances that change your thinking and/or might worsen your symptoms.
- Rest your Body: Avoid activities involving exertion and any activity which increases symptoms. Resume normal activities of daily living as tolerated.
 - Follow “Return to Activity” guidelines (attached).
- Rest your Brain: Avoid any activity which increases symptoms. Until symptoms are fully resolved, you may need to modify school/work attendance/activities, avoid text messaging, videogames and prolonged time in front of a computer or television.
- Eat a light, well-balanced diet that is nutritious in both quality and quantity.
- Awaken the concussed patient 2 hours into the night to check for worsening only if he/she lost consciousness or had prolonged memory loss, was still experiencing significant symptoms at bedtime, or if recommended by your doctor.
- Report any worsening signs or symptoms to your doctor or the emergency department.
- Do not drive until cleared to do so.

Return to Activity Guidelines:

The injured person should never return to sports or active recreation with any persisting symptoms of a concussion. (For students: no PE classes, no physical activity at recess, and no sports practice or games.) The key to recovery is to rest (physically and mentally) and to avoid activities that might cause another head injury. Athletes should not return to playing sports the same day of a concussion and until cleared by a doctor. When all symptoms have resolved at rest, follow a stepwise, symptom-limited program to return to sports activity (see progressive stages 1-6 below and discuss with your doctor). There should be approximately 24 hours (or longer) for each stage. If symptoms recur at any stage, the athlete should return to stage 1. **Medical clearance should be given before return to playing sports!**

Stages 1 through 6:

1. Rest (physically and mentally) until all symptoms have resolved
2. Light exercise (e.g. stationary cycle, brisk walking)
3. Sport-specific exercise
4. Non-contact training drills (start light-resistance training)
5. Full-contact training **after medical clearance**
6. Return to competition (game play)

Post –Concussion Syndrome

Sometimes after even a minor head injury, people notice new or persisting signs and symptoms of a concussion, listed below. Talk to your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms or if they persist more than one week.

- 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
- Dizziness or balance problems
- 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)

Reference: www.cjsportmed.com; Clin/Sport Med/ 2009; 19:185-200); Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport 3rd International Conference on Concussion in Sport.