

Home Care for Head Injuries

Your child suffered a head injury today while participating in an extracurricular sport activity. A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury creating a disturbance in brain function caused by a direct or indirect force to the head. A head injury assessment has been performed and no serious complications have been found at this time. In the list below are typical signs and symptoms of head injuries, which your child may be experiencing.

Symptoms typically resolve within 10 days, though some will have symptoms for up to three weeks or longer. Teenagers and females are at higher risk for symptoms that take longer to resolve.

Typical Signs and Symptoms of Concussion

Mark any symptoms your child experiences.

- ☐ Headache
- ☐ "Pressure in head"
- ☐ Neck Pain
- ☐ Nausea or vomiting
- ☐ Dizziness
- ☐ Blurred vision
- ☐ Balance problems
- ☐ Sensitivity to light
- ☐ Sensitivity to noise
- ☐ Feeling slowed down
- ☐ Feeling like "in a fog"
- ☐ "Don't feel right"
- ☐ Difficulty concentrating
- ☐ Difficulty remembering
- ☐ Fatigue or low energy
- ☐ Confusion
- ☐ Drowsiness
- ☐ More emotional
- ☐ Irritability
- ☐ Sadness
- ☐ Nervous or Anxious
- ☐ Trouble falling asleep (if applicable)

Symptoms can increase in severity at any time, so it's important to make sure your child is monitored for several hours.

Your child doesn't need an immediate referral, unless you notice any of the following:

- A headache that gets worse
- Repeated vomiting
- Inability to recognize people or places
- Weakness or numbness in the face, arm and/or leg
- Change in breathing rate, difficulty breathing or bluish tint to skin
- Unequal pupil size (dark areas in center of eyes)
- Any loss of consciousness, no matter how short a time
- Difficulty speaking, slurred and/or incoherent speech
- An increase or worsening of any of the symptoms marked in the box
- Increased drowsiness or difficulty in waking up
- Unusual behavior, confusion or irritability
- Decreased balance
- Any unusual activity, symptom or behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable

If your child's condition worsens or you become concerned, go to the emergency room for further evaluation by a physician or call 911.



Sports
Medicine

Recommendations for the Patient

- Avoid activity that causes or worsens signs and symptoms.
- Complete rest for 24 – 48 hours, then a gradual reintroduction to daily activities based on symptoms.
- School accommodations (extra breaks, quiet lunch, extra time on exams/projects) may be necessary.
- Limit mental activities such as computer usage, text messaging, TV, video games, etc. for 24 – 48 hours.
- Don't drive until a health care provider says it's ok.
- Can use heat/stretch for sore neck muscles, or gentle massage.
- Acetaminophen (i.e. Tylenol) may be used sparingly to control initial symptoms at the discretion of a parent or guardian.

- Anti-inflammatory medications (i.e. ibuprofen, Aleve, Advil) may be used with caution after 24 – 48 hours at the discretion of a parent or guardian.
- Don't take sleeping pills.
- Don't drink alcohol.

Graduated "Return-to-Play" Protocol

Rest – both physical and mental – is central to concussion management. It's best to return to regular activities gradually. Below is a general plan for a gradual return to regular activities. Your child's physician may modify this plan slightly depending on the injury and his or her professional opinion.

Expect to stay away from sports for at least seven days after your child's initial treatment.

Graduated Return-to-Sport Strategy

Stage	Aim	Activity	Goal of each step
1	Symptom-limited activity	Daily activities that do not provoke symptoms	Gradual reintroduction of work/school activities
2	Light aerobic exercise	Walking or stationary cycling at a slow to medium pace. NO resistance training	Increase heart rate
3	Sport-specific exercise	Running or skating drills. NO head impact activities	Add movement
4	Non-contact training drills	Harder training drills (for example, passing drills). May start progressive resistance training	Exercise, coordination and increased thinking
5	Full contact practice	Following medical clearance, participate in normal training activities	Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff
6	Return to sport	Normal game play	

Before returning to playing, your child MUST:

- Have clearance from a health care provider prior to beginning the "Return to Play" process
- Be symptom-free for at least seven days for full activity
- Have clearance from the on-site Athletic Trainer after completion of return to play protocol

References:

- *National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement: Management of Sport-Related Concussion*
<http://natajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.4085/1062-6050-49.1.07?code=nata-site>
- *Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport, 5th International Conference on Concussion in Sport, Berlin, October 2016*

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