



PATIENT INFORMATION

Concussion: What a Parent Needs to Know

Concussion is also referred to as a mild traumatic brain injury or a mild closed head injury. Concussions result in temporary changes in a person's normal functioning. Not all hits to the head cause a concussion, and you do not have to be "knocked out" in order to have a concussion. But a significant blow or sudden jolt to the head can cause a concussion, and loss of consciousness can be a primary symptom. Other symptoms include double vision or visual changes, confusion, being dazed, dizziness, headache, vomiting, and memory loss for what happened before or after the injury.

The first few days

Serious problems after a concussion are rare, but can occur. If your child shows any of the following symptoms, seek medical assistance immediately:

- > slurred speech or difficulty talking
- > severe headache or long-lasting headache
- > confusion, extreme sleepiness, or trouble waking up
- > vomiting 3 or more times
- > falling, poor balance or difficulties walking
- > a seizure (arms or legs stiffen or shake uncontrollably)
- > any other sudden change in thinking or behavior

Recovery from a concussion

Most young people will recover completely from a single concussion within two weeks; some may take longer. Common problems seen after a concussion are listed below.

Physical	Thinking (Cognitive)	Behavioral or Emotional
Headaches	Acts as if "in a fog"	Irritability or grouchiness
Low energy/run down	Gets confused easily	Sadness
Vomiting or sick stomach	Slowed thinking	Anxious or nervous
Trouble with vision	Trouble paying attention	Personality change
Poor sleep	Decline in school performance	Easily upset or frustrates quickly
Sensitive to light or noise	Difficulty remembering new information	Crying

Return to see your primary care doctor or concussion specialist if:

- > Any of the above problems last more than two weeks
- > Any problem seems especially severe

Common myths and misnomers

- > A concussion is only diagnosable if the athlete was “knocked out”
- > Loss of consciousness is the worst type of concussion
- > Concussions are always graded as mild, moderate or severe
- > Having one’s “bell rung” is normal in collision sports
- > All head injuries should get a CT Scan or MRI to make an accurate diagnosis

How to help your child while they recover

- > **Safety:** have your child take a break from sports or other activities that might cause another blow to the head.
- > **Rest:** Your child will need increased rest or quiet time as they recover from a concussion. Minimize demands on your child during this time. Make sure your child gets enough sleep and eats properly. Let your child nap if they need to.
- > **Extra Time:** Your child may be slower in doing their usual activities. Give them as much time as they need and try not to let them feel pressured to do things quickly.

If they forget, give them the information: If your child has trouble recalling information, either about the injury or day-to-day activities, just fill in the blanks for them. It doesn’t help them get better by trying to force them to recall the information.

- > **Allow breaks.** Your child may have more trouble paying attention. Encourage them to take more frequent breaks. Working for more frequent periods but for shorter amounts of time may help them.
- > **Patience:** Your child may be more irritable, short-tempered or get more easily frustrated than what is usual for them. This is probably because of the concussion. Don’t take it personally and encourage your child to take a break to cool off.

Return-to-school guidelines

Your child’s medical doctor will tell you when your child is ready to go back to school. Typically, most kids can go back within a few days of their injury. Some kids do best if they start out slowly, and build up over time. For example, going for a couple hours, half-days, and then attempting a full-time schedule.

Inform the school that your child had a concussion. Start with your child’s teacher but also make sure the school nurse and administrators know that you child is in recovery from a concussion.

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