

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I DO TO HELP WITH RECOVERY?

You may find certain activities may provoke your symptoms, for instance, highly stimulating situations. It is best to temporarily avoid such activities early on until you are fully recovered from your concussion.

Some examples of stimulating activities include:

- Watching television, going to movies or concerts, or being in crowded areas
- Job related tasks that require significant concentration, such as studying and reading
- Physically demanding tasks, such as sports or household chores (i.e., yard work, cleaning, etc.)

There are also healthy activities that you can do to promote recovery, including:

- Getting plenty of rest and sleep (~8 hours a night)
- Refrain from drinking alcohol or doing drugs

Ignoring your symptoms, or "toughing it out," often can make your symptoms worse. It is important that you follow these suggestions to fully recover from your concussion.

HOW DO I KNOW THAT I AM READY TO DRIVE, RETURN TO WORK, OR SPORTS?

Talk with your health care professional about when it is safe for you to operate a car, heavy machinery, and return to school or work. Do not return to sports or recreational activities before talking to your health care professional. A repeat concussion before the first one heals can be very dangerous and may slow your recovery and lead to long-term problems.

WHEN SHOULD I FOLLOW-UP WITH A CONCUSSION SPECIALIST?

Most patients recover from their injuries quickly, however, if you have symptoms that do not go away after three weeks; even when you follow the suggestions above, please contact your primary care physician/pediatrician to identify a specialist in your area.

For more information about the TBI model system at UPMC and Pitt:

www.rehabilomics.pitt.edu

or go to

www.msktc.org

to learn about other model systems funded by NIDRR

Concussion Care and Follow-Up



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UPMC REHABILITATION
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SUPPORTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION/NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
DISABILITY REHABILITATION AND
RESEARCH
#H133A120087





WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to your head that causes the brain to move quickly back and forth. Some common ways you can get a concussion are when you hit your head during a fall, car crash, or sports injury. It is possible that you may lose consciousness (“get knocked out”) or you have a change in your thinking without losing consciousness. A concussion is often described by health care professionals as a mild brain injury; however, it is important to know that the effects of these types of injuries can still be serious.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT WHEN I GET HOME?

Most people recovery fully within the first seven days following a concussion, but symptoms may persist for a few months or even longer depending on the degree of injury, whether you had another similar injury in the past (research indicates that recurrent brain injury, even concussions, can have cumulative negative effects), or due to other factors that are not well understood by medical science at this time.

Common symptoms following concussion include:

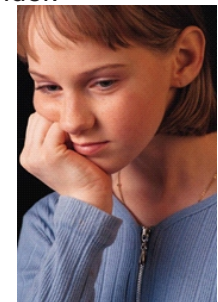
- *Physical changes:* Nausea or vomiting, headache, sensitivity to light or noise, dizziness or balance problems, fatigue, or blurred vision.
- *Problems with thinking or memory:* Difficulty with concentration, thinking clearly, remembering new information, or feeling slowed down.
- *Emotional changes:* Irritability, sadness, anxiety, nervousness, or just not feeling like yourself.
- *Sleep difficulties:* Sleeping more often, having trouble falling or staying asleep.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

You should return to the emergency department if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Repeated vomiting
- Severe or worsening headache
- Severe or worsening dizziness
- Unusual drowsiness or unable to awaken as usual
- Confusion or change in behavior or speech.
- Unequal pupils or unexplained vision changes
- Seizures
- Balance problems

A family member or friend should stay with you to check for the signs above. You may take medications as prescribed by your doctor. Do not drive, operate machinery, or drink alcohol until cleared by your medical provider.



for an appointment with a physician specializing in concussion call: 1-800-533-8762.