

Concussion Information for Patients and Parents

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a disturbance in the functioning of the brain after certain traumas to the head. Concussion may occur with direct blows or very sudden movements of the head.

Typically, a person with a concussion has short-lived neurological problems that go away spontaneously, such as loss of consciousness, memory loss, headache, drowsiness, confusion, ringing in the ears, blurry vision, unusual eye movements, and/or slurred speech. Some symptoms tend to appear days after the injury: headaches, sleep problems, fatigue, confusion, trouble concentrating or reading, depression or anxiety.

Is an imaging study, such as a CT or a MRI scan, needed to diagnose a concussion?

The diagnosis of a concussion is made based on the patient's history and medical exam. Regular CTs and MRIs are unlikely to show any changes in the brain with a fresh concussion. Rarely, an imaging study is obtained to rule out another cause for the brain dysfunction.

What can I do to speed up recovery?

You can hasten recovery by taking a break from academic, physical and work activities, and by gradually returning to a full schedule, as you tolerate it. Your symptoms may last longer if you return to your full schedule too soon. 85-90% of those with a concussion are free of symptoms 10 days after the injury.

Initially:

- Limit activities that bring about symptoms, such as texting, computer games, TV, reading.
- Sleep is particularly important during recovery. Avoid sleepovers and late nights.
- Be sure to get more rest than usual
- Pace your self, don't over-schedule
- Stop all exercising and sports involvement
- Drinks plenty of fluids
- Avoid busy, noisy, stimulating environment
- Consider school accommodations

How do I return to activities gradually?

You can use the chart below to guide your return to activities. Start with Step 1 and proceed to the next step. If you develop symptoms, please return to the previous step after 24 hours rest.

Step 1	No activities, complete rest, proceed to step 2 if you have no complaints for at least 24 hours
Step 2	Return to school and academic activities. To go to step 3 one must have completed a full day of school and all the make up work without symptoms.
Step 3	Light aerobic exercise such as walking, swimming, stationary cycling, but no resistance training.
Step 4	Sport specific exercise - for example skating in hockey, running in soccer, progressive addition of resistance training at steps 4 and 5
Step 5	Non-contact training drills
Step 6	Full contact training drills after medical clearance
Step 7	Game play

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if: you develop new symptoms or if your symptoms worsen despite rest
 your symptoms are not improving as expected you are having difficulties with academics
or you have questions about when and how to return to activities.