



Concussions: What every parent needs to know

A concussion is a form of brain injury and should be taken **very** seriously. Without proper care it can worsen, persist or even become life threatening. A concussion occurs when there is a blow to the head causing the brain to rock back and forth within the skull. Many factors affect the severity of a concussion. Symptoms can range from a mild annoyance to being incapacitated and may emerge even weeks after the event. While over 80% of concussions will resolve within a week, some can last for months and cause significant difficulty. Proper care during recovery is essential.

Rest is the single most important element to recovery. Concussions affect the regulation of blood flow within the brain. Continued physical or mental activity puts demands on the brain that require a very precise blood flow response. During recovery from a concussion the brain may not be able to properly coordinate this blood flow and further symptoms and possibly damage can occur with over exertion.

During recovery it is critically important to avoid another blow to the head. The Second Concussion Syndrome is a rapidly fatal swelling of the brain that can occur in this setting. Washington state law now mandates that a player be removed from competition should there be any suggestion of a head trauma or concussion and should not return to play until evaluated. These rules were put into place to prevent these tragedies.

Dizzy spells can occur unexpectedly during recovery. Activities that could result in a fall are to be avoided: Driving an automobile, riding any type of bike, skate boarding, long boarding, roller skating, horseback riding, running, jogging or riding a scooter to name a few.

The symptoms of a concussion can continue to appear over a prolonged period. These may include dizziness, headache, confusion, difficulty concentrating, difficulty with memory, nausea, drowsiness, sensitivity to light, sensitivity to sound, irritability, frustration, and unexplained emotional swings. Along with physical rest, mental rest is necessary to speed recovery as well. Avoid video games, watching TV, reading or listening to loud stimulating music until all symptoms of the concussion have passed. Any activity that results in worsened symptoms should be stopped immediately. This may cause great difficulty with attending school, keeping up with school work and boredom. Parents should talk with the teacher or appropriate school administrator to get accommodation early. This will help prevent school pressures from adding to the stress of the recovery.

A realistic expectation for return to competition is **two to three weeks** if the recovery is uncomplicated and straightforward. Rushing recovery only risks prolonging the symptoms and could threaten the entire season.

Return to Play Program

1. Physical and mental rest until there are no symptoms for 24 hrs.
2. Light aerobic exercise (walking, stationary cycle, etc.) for 24 hrs.
3. Sport-specific exercise including pushups and situps for 24 hrs.
4. Non-contact training drills and light resistance training for 24 hrs
5. Medical re-evaluation in the office.
6. Full contact training for 24 hrs.
7. Return to competition (game play).

IF SYMPTOMS RECUR AT ANY POINT IN THE PROGRESSION THE ATHLETE SHOULD RETURN TO THE FIRST STEP.

It is vital not to return to play until all symptoms have completely resolved at rest and at each step of the progression. Symptoms are an indication that the brain has not recovered and is vulnerable.

Be patient.

Carl A. Lindgren MD

Healthy Future Pediatrics



www.healthyfuturepediatrics.com