

Concussion

What is a concussion?

A **concussion**—or **mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI)**—happens when a sudden jolt or blow to the head disturbs the way your brain works. This can make you feel confused, disoriented, or dazed. It may also cause you to lose consciousness or to have some memory loss. You don't have to be knocked out to have a concussion.

How long do concussion symptoms last?

It's normal to feel symptoms for several days or weeks. (See the list of symptoms below.) Early on, symptoms may get worse before they improve. While every concussion is different, most concussions get better within a few weeks.

Common signs and symptoms

Physical signs and symptoms include:

- Headache, fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- Dizziness
- Mild-to-moderate nausea or vomiting
- Vision changes, sensitivity to noise and light
- Changes in sleep patterns, including
 - Drowsiness
 - Increased sleepiness
 - Difficulty falling or staying asleep

Mental and emotional signs and symptoms include:

- Feeling mentally foggy
- Shorter attention span, memory problems
- Slowed thinking, difficulty reading
- Increased irritability or sadness
- Feeling emotionally sensitive or anxious

When should I get emergency care?

Get emergency care if you or the person you are caring for has:

- Repeated vomiting
- Worsening, severe headache
- Seizures
- Excessive drowsiness or loss of consciousness
- Confusion or strange behavior
- Slurred speech
- Double vision
- Weakness, numbness, or tingling in arms or legs
- Behavior that is increasingly agitated or combative
- Bleeding or draining fluid from the nose or ears

What can I do to speed up recovery?

Be sure to:

- Do some light physical activity, as long as it doesn't worsen your symptoms.
- Limit activities such as school, work, and screen time to a level that does not worsen symptoms.
- Get good sleep. It's common to feel tired and have low energy levels after a concussion. Getting the appropriate amount of sleep is critical to helping your brain recover.
 - Aim for 8 hours of sleep nightly.
 - Take short naps during the day if you feel tired.
 - Limit naps to less than 1 hour so they don't interfere with night-time sleep, which is the best sleep for your brain.

Continued on page 2.

DO NOT:

- Do any physical activities that pose a high risk of repeating a head injury.
- Drive or operate a motorized vehicle until you are cleared by your physician.
- Exercise, train, and play sports until cleared by your physician. **Getting another concussion during the healing period can lead to a longer-lasting and more severe brain injury.**

Manage your symptoms.

- As your symptoms improve, you can begin to add short periods (10 to 15 minutes at a time) of light physical activity as long as your symptoms do not worsen.
- It's common to have neck and upper shoulder pain after a concussion. If you have this kind of pain, talk to your healthcare provider about getting physical therapy. You may also try ice therapy for 15 to 20 minutes off and on throughout the day, gentle massage, and stretching of your neck and shoulder muscles.
- It's common to have mild, longer-lasting dizziness after a concussion, but it should get better over time. If you experience severe dizziness, tell your healthcare provider. Medical and physical therapy treatments may quickly help you feel better.

Get appropriate nutrition.

A well-balanced, healthy diet is helpful during recovery from a brain injury. Be sure to:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Avoid caffeine in the evening as it may affect your sleep.

If you have any questions about health supplements, please talk to your healthcare provider

Take the right medicine.

- **You can take acetaminophen** (Tylenol or others) for your headaches. Avoid anti-inflammatory medicines, such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) for the first 3 days after your head injury.
- **Avoid treating every headache with medicine, and try to only treat the more severe headaches.** Often, taking too much medicine for headaches can cause you to have more headaches.
- **Avoid opioid pain medicines** as these can worsen the effects of a concussion and slow your recovery.

When can I return to school or work?

Slowly return to school or work activities. These activities can often make symptoms worse. Gradually follow these steps and be sure to take several rest breaks throughout the day:

- 1 Increase reading, texting, and screen time 5 to 15 minutes at a time.
- 2 Gradually increase time spent doing homework or work activities outside of the work setting. Use a quiet room, and only work on shorter assignments.
- 3 Return to school or work part-time. Only attend certain classes, limit the number of tests you take, and do less homework than normal.
- 4 Return to school or work full-time.

When can I return to play / sports?

You should return to play or sports only after returning to full school or work activities. You may also need clearance from your doctor. Utah law requires that certain athletes have a note from a healthcare provider before returning to sports activities. There is evidence that a gradual return to play can help recovery. Talk with your healthcare provider.

Intermountain Healthcare complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Se proveen servicios de interpretación gratis. Hable con un empleado para solicitarlo. 我們將根據您的需求提供免費的口譯服務。請找尋工作人員協助。

© 2014–2022 Intermountain Healthcare. All rights reserved. The content presented here is for your information only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, and it should not be used to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns. F5364 - 05/22 (Last reviewed -05/22)

Also available in Spanish.