

A concussion is the most common form of brain injury. It often heals on its own, with 85 percent of concussions improved in 7-10 days. However, there are steps you can take to speed up the recovery process.

Be sure to eat plenty of good fats like olive oil, coconut oil, avocados or nuts. You should also eat plenty of vegetables and fruits and avoid processed foods. Also, don't forget to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water and avoiding soda and energy drinks. Supplements you can take to boost recovery include fish oil (DHA), turmeric and probiotics.

You should get at least 8 hours of sleep every night. Make an effort to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, and avoid napping within a few hours of your bed time. Skip watching TV or using a cell phone or iPad in bed, as this will disrupt your sleep schedule. If you're struggling to fall asleep, you might want to consider taking the supplement melatonin.

Controlled exercise has been shown to help concussion recovery. If it doesn't worsen your symptoms, you might want to try walking (outside or on a treadmill) for 10-15 minutes. When at home, walk around barefoot to improve your balance.

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Home Care for Head Injuries

Your child suffered a head injury today while participating in an extracurricular sport activity. A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury creating a disturbance in brain function caused by a direct or indirect force to the head. A head injury assessment has been performed and no serious complications have been found at this time. In the list below are typical signs and symptoms of head injuries, which your child may be experiencing.

Symptoms typically resolve within 10 days, though some will have symptoms for up to three weeks or longer. Teenagers and females are at higher risk for symptoms that take longer to resolve.

Typical Signs and Symptoms of Concussion

Mark any symptoms your child experiences.

- Headache
- "Pressure in head"
- Neck Pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision
- Balance problems
- Sensitivity to light
- Sensitivity to noise
- Feeling slowed down
- Feeling like "in a fog"
- "Don't feel right"
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering
- Fatigue or low energy
- Confusion
- Drowsiness
- More emotional
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Nervous or Anxious
- Trouble falling asleep (if applicable)

Your child doesn't need an immediate referral, unless you notice any of the following:

- A headache that gets worse
- Repeated vomiting
- Inability to recognize people or places
- Weakness or numbness in the face, arm and/or leg
- Change in breathing rate, difficulty breathing or bluish tint to skin
- Unequal pupil size (dark areas in center of eyes)
- Any loss of consciousness, no matter how short a time
- Difficulty speaking, slurred and/or incoherent speech
- An increase or worsening of any of the symptoms marked in the box
- Increased drowsiness or difficulty in waking up
- Unusual behavior, confusion or irritability
- Decreased balance
- Any unusual activity, symptom or behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable

If your child's condition worsens or you become concerned, go to the emergency room for further evaluation by a physician or call 911.

Symptoms can increase in severity at any time, so it's important to make sure your child is monitored for several hours.

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Recommendations for the Patient

- Avoid activity that causes or worsens signs and symptoms.
- Complete rest for 24 - 48 hours, then a gradual reintroduction to daily activities based on symptoms.
- School accommodations (extra breaks, quiet lunch, extra time on exams/projects) may be necessary.
- Limit mental activities such as computer usage, text messaging, TV, video games, etc. for 24 - 48 hours.
- Don't drive until a health care provider says it's ok.
- Can use heat/stretch for sore neck muscles, or gentle massage.
- Acetaminophen (i.e. Tylenol) may be used sparingly to control initial symptoms at the discretion of a parent or guardian.

- Anti-inflammatory medications (i.e. ibuprofen, Aleve, Advil) may be used with caution after 24 - 48 hours at the discretion of a parent or guardian.
- Don't take sleeping pills.
- Don't drink alcohol.

Graduated "Return-to-Play" Protocol

Rest - both physical and mental - is central to concussion management. It's best to return to regular activities gradually. Below is a general plan for a gradual return to regular activities. Your child's physician may modify this plan slightly depending on the injury and his or her professional opinion.

Expect to stay away from sports for at least seven days after your child's initial treatment.

Graduated Return-to-Sport Strategy

Stage	Aim	Activity	Goal of each step
1	Symptom-limited activity	Daily activities that do not provoke symptoms	Gradual reintroduction of work/school activities
2	Light aerobic exercise	Walking or stationary cycling at a slow to medium pace. NO resistance training	Increase heart rate
3	Sport-specific exercise	Running or skating drills. NO head impact activities	Add movement
4	Non-contact training drills	Harder training drills (for example, passing drills). May start progressive resistance training	Exercise, coordination and increased thinking
5	Full contact practice	Following medical clearance, participate in normal training activities	Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff
6	Return to sport	Normal game play	

Before returning to playing, your child MUST:

- Have clearance from a health care provider prior to beginning the "Return to Play" process
- Be symptom-free for at least seven days for full activity
- Have clearance from the on-site Athletic Trainer after completion of return to play protocol

References:

- *National Athletic Trainers' Association Position Statement: Management of Sport-Related Concussion*
<http://natajournals.org/doi/pdf/10.4085/1062-6050-49.1.07?code=nata-site>
- *Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport, 5th International Conference on Concussion in Sport, Berlin, October 2016*

Mercy Clinic Physicians for Concussions:

Brian Mahaffey, MD
Primary Care
Sports Medicine

15945 Clayton Road
Suite 210
Ballwin, MO 63011

633 Emerson Rd.
Suite 20
Creve Coeur, MO 63141

Nicholas Greiner, DO
Primary Care
Sports Medicine

10777 Sunset Office Dr.
Suite 120
St. Louis, MO 63127

314.325.3068

Other Mercy Provider:

Contact Info:



Concussion Recovery

Practice breathing techniques.

Diaphragmatic breathing helps with relaxation, posture and core stability. Practice this lying on your back, as shown below. Take slow, deep breaths through your nose. Focus on keeping your chest still and allowing your belly to expand when you breathe in, and contract when you breathe out. Do this for 5 minutes every day. You can also use this technique if you're having trouble sleeping.



Relieve neck pain.

Suboccipital massage: Massage your suboccipitals (the muscles where your neck meets the base of your skull) with a tennis or lacrosse ball, as shown in the picture below. This will help relieve your neck pain/stiffness and headaches.



Neck/Upper back stretch: Lie on your stomach, as shown below. Stretch your neck by looking up and down, side to side, and bringing your ear to your shoulder. Do each sequence 10 times.



If your symptoms don't improve, or if you have questions or concerns, please call one of our specialists:

Nicholas Greiner, DO
Andrew Lawrence, MD
Brian Mahaffey, MD
Mercy Sports Medicine
314.325.3068

To learn more about Mercy Sports Medicine, or to find a location near you, visit mercy.net/ConcussionSupport.

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