

CONCUSSION



What is a concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury that changes the way the brain works and functions. Concussion is caused by trauma to the head, or a blow or jolt to the body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly move back and forth. A child does not have to lose consciousness (“be knocked out”) to have a concussion. Although concussions are usually not life-threatening, they can have serious effects on a child’s physical, emotional, and cognitive functioning.

While a child’s brain is healing, he or she is much more prone to having another concussion. Repeat concussions during the healing phase can lead to longer recovery times, and in very rare cases, permanent disability and even death. The effects of concussion are usually temporary, but proper evaluation and management of symptoms is important after a head injury, in order to avoid complications, prolonged recovery, and repeat injuries.

Common symptoms of concussion:

Physical		Cognitive	Emotional	Sleep
Headache	Numbness or tingling in the body	“Foggy” thinking	Sadness	Difficulty falling asleep
Dizziness	Blurred or double vision	Feeling slowed down	Irritability	Difficulty staying asleep
Nausea or vomiting	Balance problems	Difficulty remembering	Anxiety or nervousness	Sleeping less than usual
Sensitive to light or noise	Fatigue	Difficulty concentrating	More emotional	Sleeping more than usual

When should I seek medical attention?

If your child has any of the above symptoms, they should be evaluated by a medical provider before being allowed to return to sports or other physical activity. A child who has a concussion may appear dazed, stunned or confused. They may move clumsily, and speak or answer questions slowly. They may have mood, behavior, or personality changes. They may have difficulty recalling events prior to or after the hit or fall. Even one of these behaviors should raise concern for concussion.

When is a concussion an emergency?

Sometimes a child with a blow to the head or body requires immediate medical attention, to evaluate for a more serious brain injury. “Red flags” that should prompt emergency medical attention are listed below:

- Unequal pupils
- Worsening confusion
- Loss of consciousness
- Numbness
- Very drowsy or cannot be awakened
- Slurred speech
- Repeated episodes of vomiting
- Persistent weakness
- Worsening headache
- Convulsions or seizures
- Cannot recognize people or places
- Decreased coordination



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How long will it take for my child to recover?

Concussion affects every child differently. Some children will recover very quickly, while others may take many days, or even weeks or months, to recover fully. Proper rest is crucial to a full recovery. Your child should avoid any physical activity or athletics until cleared by a physician. Television, video games, computers, and other stimulating electronic devices should be avoided. Your child may need to rest quietly at home for a few days, particularly if the school environment or other outings and activities cause recurrent or worsening symptoms.

Returning to school and sports is usually a gradual process. Your medical provider will monitor your child's symptoms, and will set limits to physical activity and suggest modifications to your child's school routine during their recovery. Eventually your child should be able to return to their normal activities. The decision to return to contact sports often requires careful consideration, with input from your medical provider. Many children return to contact sports after a concussion. However, children with prolonged or complicated recoveries, multiple concussions, or a history of more severe brain injury, may be advised to avoid contact sports in the future.

How is concussion treated?

Proper rest and adequate recovery time are often the only treatments needed. However, your neurology provider may suggest dietary supplements and/or medications that can help relieve symptoms and support your child during recovery. Your child may benefit from physical, emotional, or cognitive therapies in the wake of head injury. Your medical provider will carefully monitor your child's symptoms and functioning after head injury, and tailor a treatment plan to meet your child's unique needs.

References and Resources:

<http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion/>

https://www.dellchildrens.net/services_and_programs/concussion_center/

http://kidshealth.org/kid/ill_injure/aches/concussion.html

