



Eric J. Freitag, Psy.D.
Program Director
Credentialed ImPACT Consultant™

East Bay: (925) 988-0569
Marin: (415) 457-3451
www.sportconcussion.com

Post Concussion Injury Fact Sheet and Recovery Guide

For Parents and Athletes

What is a concussion?

A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by a blow to the head. This injury causes the brain to not function normally for a period of time. Concussions may be referred to as mild traumatic brain injuries and get better with time. However, occasionally there can be more significant problems, and it is important that the symptoms from a concussion be monitored. When you suffer this injury, you may have problems with concentrations and memory, notice an inability to focus, feel fatigued, have a headache, or feel nauseated. Bright lights and loud noises may bother you. You may feel irritable or unable to tolerate your normal school and activity schedule. **Resting** the brain is the first step in treatment.

What should I watch for?

After evaluation by your athletic trainer or physician, it may be determined that it is safe to go home. Otherwise, you may have to go to the hospital. Parents, if your athlete is sent home, they should not be left alone. A responsible adult should be with the athlete to ensure there is no worsening or dramatic change in symptoms.

Symptoms from the concussion may persist when your athlete is sent home but **should not worsen**, you should watch for such things as:

1. Increasing headache
2. Increasing or onset of vomiting
3. Increasing confusion
4. Unusual sleepiness or difficulty being awakened
5. Trouble using arms or legs
6. Garbled speech
7. Convulsions or seizures

If you notice any of these problems or have any other problem that appears worse as compared to how you felt at the time you left the stadium or practice, immediately go to the hospital.

Is it okay to go to sleep?

A concussion can make someone feel drowsy or tired. As long as you are not getting worse, it is all right for you to sleep. We do want a responsible adult to be at home with you in case any problems arise. You do not need to wake the athlete up periodically, but someone should check on the athlete every few hours.

May I take something for pain?

Do not take any medication unless you're physician has told you to do so. Normally, we advise to not take anything stronger than Tylenol. Initially, avoid the use of aspirin, Motrin, Aleve, or any other anti-inflammatory medication that you may have been taking. We also ask that you not consume any alcohol and avoid caffeine and any other stimulants. If you are taking any supplements, we would suggest that you discontinue the use of them as well.

May I eat after the game?

It is fine for you to eat if you are hungry. Remember, some players do have a sense of nausea and fatigue, and often find that their appetite is depressed immediately after a concussion.

Do I need a CT scan or MRI examination?

If the athletic trainer or team physician has determined that you are able to go home after the game, these types of diagnostic tests are generally not necessary. If you are sent to the hospital with a more serious injury, a CT scan or MRI examination

may be performed based on your symptoms. If your symptoms linger for several days after a concussion, a CT scan or MRI examination may be a consideration.

How long will it take to recover?

Each athlete responds differently and recovers at different rates. You can help recovery by ensuring that you get adequate rest from physical, cognitive and external stimulation. This means that you may have to stay home from school or adjust your schedule. It may also mean that you have to miss out on some desirable activities, for example video games, texting, or a school dance. Any time you increasing the demands on your brain to concentrate, focus, or engage, you can delay recover and actually make the symptoms worse. You will know that you are doing too much if you feel symptoms increase (e.g. headache, foginess, feeling “out of it”) while you are involved in a specific activity.

When can I return to sports? A specific sport concussion protocol will be followed. You will take a neuro-cognitive test and your symptoms will be monitored. Return to play decisions vary by individual, and will be based on the physical exam and a return to baseline or normal neuro-cognitive function. Once you no longer have symptoms at both rest and exertion and your cognitive scores are normal, then you will be released for a gradual return to participation.

What will make my injury worse? Certainly, a repeated blow to the head can be very serious and potentially deadly. This is why we are taking every step necessary to make sure you brain is fully healed before you are allowed to return to participation. However, there are other activities or lifestyle choices that can exacerbate symptoms and delay your recovery. Below are further suggestions to help the healing process:

1. Did I mention the importance of rest?
2. Having a balanced diet and staying properly hydrated
3. Not using drugs or alcohol. We already know that drugs affect the way our brain functions and will make a person with a brain injury feel even worse
4. And finally, REST! If you are bored, then you are supporting your recovery.

If you should have further questions about this injury or recovery, please contact our office.