

## CONCUSSION CARE: THE COMPLETE GUIDE

### WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER SUSTAINED A POSSIBLE CONCUSSION INJURY?

- You do not necessarily need to be immediately seen for evaluation by a physician.
  - You should monitor your symptoms over the next 24-48 hours for any significant changes and watch for “Red Flags”.
  - “Red Flags” are a list of symptoms which may indicate a more serious injury. Should any of these symptoms arise, seek emergent medical attention.

Significant Headache (10/10)  
Slurred Speech

Lack of Coordination  
Vomiting (more than 2x)

Seizures  
Stumbling/Loss of Balance

- We expect a myriad of symptoms associated with a concussion injury. It is important to understand that every concussion is unique and each person may have different symptoms and symptom severity.
  - Common symptoms to expect after a concussion include:

Headache  
Head Pressure  
Nausea  
Mild Balance Problems  
Dizziness  
Sensitivity to Light  
Sensitivity to Noise

Blurred and/or double Vision  
Fatigue  
Trouble Falling Asleep  
Sleeping More Than Usual  
Sleeping Less Than Usual  
Drowsiness  
Irritability

Sadness  
Nervousness  
Feeling More Emotional  
Feeling Slowed Down  
Feeling Mentally “Foggy”  
Difficulty Concentrating  
Difficulty Remembering

- There are some [activities or strategies](#) you should and should not be doing in the first 24-48 hours after a concussion injury.
  - IT IS OK TO:
    - Use Tylenol (Acetaminophen) for headache and neck pain
    - Use an Ice Pack on the head/neck
    - Eat and drink fluids as tolerated
    - Try to get a good night of sleep (7-9 hours)
    - Complete school work to symptom tolerance
    - Use a computer, tablet, or smart phone to symptom tolerance
    - Do light symptom-limited activity, such as walking & light daily chores, to symptom tolerance
  - THERE IS NO NEED TO:
    - Check the eyes with a light
    - Wake up every hour
    - Stay in bed or a dark room

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- **PLEASE AVOID:**
  - Drinking alcohol
  - Driving
  - Strenuous physical activity, such as running, weight lifting, sports, heavy yard work
  - Taking NSAIDs for you headache, such as Advil, Aleve, Aspirin, etc.

#### 4. What exactly is “symptom-limited” activity?

- This is a term we use in the concussion world to advise patients how much activity is “OK”.
- Think of it like Goldilocks... Too little or too much activity can cause increases concussion symptoms or a longer recovery.
- We use a scale of 0 (none) – 10 (worst ever) to measure symptoms & “symptom-limited” means we stop activity after symptoms increase by more than 2 points.
  - For example, if you headache is a 4/10 and you start an activity like working on the computer, you are okay to work until your headache reaches a 7/10 – then take a break until your symptom settles to 4/10.
  - Same goes for symptoms like dizziness, nausea, sensitivity to light, etc.

### WHEN AND HOW SHOULD YOU BE SEEN FOR EVALUATION OF A CONCUSSION INJURY?

1. You should plan to schedule a visit with a physician who specializes in the treatment of concussion injuries 3 to 4 days after the injury.
  - If your symptoms have been ongoing for more than a few days, you should schedule a visit at your earliest convenience.
2. What to expect during your visit for a concussion evaluation.
  - Review of your current symptoms, including what makes your symptoms feel better or worse.
  - Review of personal and family medical history that impacts concussion treatment options.
  - Physical examination and concussion-specific testing. This may include:
    - Cognitive exam evaluating orientation, memory, & concentration
    - Coordination & limited balance exam
    - Vestibular & Ocular Motor exam
3. The goal of this visit is to identify specific [concussion recovery trajectories](#) and develop a targeted treatment program.

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### WHAT TO EXPECT AS PART OF TREATMENT FOR A CONCUSSION INJURY?

1. The first step is to review appropriate behavior modifications, symptom management strategies, and establishing a good routine.
  - Review good [sleep hygiene](#) strategies
    - 7-10 hours per night – too much or too little sleep can impact recovery
    - Consistent bed time and wake time is very important, but is different for each individual and family
    - Try to limit napping – if needed, no more than a 20-30 minute nap per day
    - Too much napping can disrupt your normal sleep pattern
  - Review [appropriate nutrition](#) for recovery of your concussion
    - Avoid skipping meals
    - Nauseous? Try dry foods (crackers & toast) or cold foods (sandwiches). Avoid very sweet, greasy, fried, or spicy foods.
    - Make sure you are hydrating with clear liquids
    - Avoid or limit caffeinated drinks & supplements
  - Guidance for return to school activities and activities of daily living
    - Concussion injuries are the only sport injury that significantly impacts our school and social lives
    - It is important to participate in these activities, when appropriate, with specific academic modification recommendations, if needed
    - Recommendations will vary between individuals and be specific to your situation
  - Guidance for [appropriate Light Aerobic Exercise](#)
    - Recent research shows light, symptom-limited aerobic exercise can help with concussion recovery.
    - Early exercise may include exercise bike or walking activity at a target heart rate.
    - Daily exercise helps manage our level of stress, improve our mood, and help with good sleep regulation.
  - Specific symptom management strategies
    - This may include suggestions such as utilizing blue light blocking or computer glasses during screen time to help decrease symptoms
2. For some patients, there is a role for medications to help manage symptoms
  - We will discuss possible Medication or Supplements to help manage your symptoms
  - If indicated, these recommendations are specific to symptom profiles and vary from patient to patient



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3. Other patients may need a formal rehabilitation program. At TCO, we have [sub-specialized physical therapists](#) who will guide you through your rehabilitation program
  - Vestibular Therapy – helps address issues with dizziness, balance, & other symptoms
  - Ocular Motor Therapy – helps address issues with vision, focus, & other symptoms
  - Exertion Therapy – helps in the overall recovery of concussion injuries
  
4. Finally, we can provide [Return to Play Guidance](#) specific to the sport or activity you would like resume, when appropriate
  - If you return to sport activity before your concussion is healed, you are at risk for re-injury. This may result in a much longer recovery.
  - Ensuring that you are symptom-free and have a normal exam.
  - Providing a sport-specific, step-wise return to activity progression