

Follow-up Care for a Head Injury or Concussion

An athlete who has experienced a head injury or concussion may have signs and symptoms from a head injury that do not become apparent until hours after the initial traumatic event. At the time of injury, hospitalization may not have been required. However, you should be alert for possible signs and symptoms that the athlete may experience. If you observe any of these symptoms, please seek medical attention immediately.

- Persistent or increasing headache, particularly in a localized area
- Vacant stare (puzzled facial expressions)
- Delayed verbal and motor responses
- Confusion and inability to focus attention (easily distracted)
- Disorientation, slurred speech
- Gross observable lack of coordination
- Emotions out of proportion to circumstances
- Drowsiness, lethargy or sleepiness
- One pupil larger than the other, or dilated pupils
- Memory deficits
- Bleeding and/or clear fluid from the nose or ears
- Nausea, vomiting
- Any period of loss of consciousness

If any of the above listed signs or symptoms are apparent, seek medical attention immediately. If the athlete goes to sleep for the night, awake him or her every few hours.

If the condition is not determined to be urgent, the athlete should:

- Rest quietly
- Not consume any medication except Tylenol as prescribed
- Not consume alcoholic beverages
- Not drive a vehicle
- Not participate or play again without medical clearance by a physician

Sources: Brain Injury Association, 1997; James Knochel, M.D.

GRADES OF CONCUSSION

Grade One:

1. Transient confusion (inability to maintain a coherent stream of thought)
2. No loss of consciousness
3. Concussion symptoms or mental status resolve in less than 15 minutes from examination time

Grade Two:

1. Transient confusion
2. No loss of consciousness
3. Concussion symptoms or mental status (including amnesia) last more than 15 minutes from examination time

Grade Three:

1. Any loss of consciousness

WHEN TO RETURN TO PLAY

Grade 1 concussion15 minutes or less
Multiple grade 1 concussions7-10 days
Grade 2 concussions7-10 days
Grade 3 concussions10-14 days

Return to play only after being asymptomatic with normal neurologic assessment at rest and with exercise. Medical clearance is required.

PRESBYTERIAN SPORTS NETWORK EMERGENCY ROOM PHONE NUMBERS

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For help in finding a physician who's right for you, call Presbyterian Sports Network at 1-800-4-Presby or visit the website at www.phscare.org

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