

Pearson Physical Therapy Newsletter

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Physical Therapist's Guide to Concussion

In the past few years, concussion has received a great deal of attention as people in the medical and sports worlds have begun to speak out about the long-term problems associated with this injury. The Centers for Disease Control estimate that in sports alone, more than 3.8 million concussions occur each year. Recent scientific evidence highlights the need for proper care to prevent complications from concussion.

If you think you might have a concussion:

- Seek medical care immediately.
- Avoid any additional trauma to your head, don't engage in any activity that carries a risk of head injury.
- Limit activities of all kinds, including school and work.

What Is Concussion?

Concussion is a brain injury that occurs when the brain is shaken inside the skull, causing changes in the brain's chemistry and energy supply. A concussion might happen as a result of a direct blow to the head or an indirect force, such as whiplash. You might or might not lose consciousness.

Signs and Symptoms

There are many symptoms related to concussion, and they can affect your physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Physical symptoms may include:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Difficulty with balance
- Nausea/vomiting
- Fatigue
- Difficulty with sleeping
- Double or blurred vision
- Sensitivity to light and sound

Cognitive (*thinking*) symptoms may include:

- Difficulty with short-term or long-term memory
- Confusion
- Slowed "processing" (for instance, a decreased ability to think through problems)
- "Fogginess"
- Difficulty with concentration

Emotional symptoms may include:

- Irritability
- Restlessness
- Anxiety

(Con't on page 2)

Concussion: **Emotional symptoms may include:** (con't)

- Depression
- Mood swings
- Aggression
- Decreased tolerance of stress

How Is It Diagnosed?

Concussion is easy to miss because diagnostic imaging, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or a computed tomography (CT) scan, usually is normal.

Because of the variety of possible symptoms that can interfere with day-to-day activity, **seek coordinated medical care immediately**. Your health care professionals may include a physician with expertise in concussion, a neuropsychologist, and a vestibular physical therapist (a physical therapist who specializes in treating balance disorders and dizziness).

After a concussion, limit any kind of exertion. The brain won't have time to heal if you increase physical exertion too soon such as returning to social activities or sports or if you increase cognitive demands too soon, such as returning to school or work. You can slowly resume normal activities only once your symptoms have improved and *stay* improved.

How Can a Physical Therapist Help?

Physical therapists can evaluate and treat many problems related to concussion. Because no two concussions are the same, the physical therapist's examination is essential to assess your individual symptoms and limitations. The physical therapist then designs a treatment program.

Help Stop Dizziness and Improve Your Balance

If you have dizziness or difficulty with your balance following a concussion, vestibular physical therapy may help. The vestibular system, which includes the inner ear and its connections with the brain, is responsible for sensing head movement, keeping your eyes focused when you move your head, and helping you keep your balance. A qualified vestibular physical therapist can provide specific exercises and training to reduce or stop dizziness and improve balance and stability.

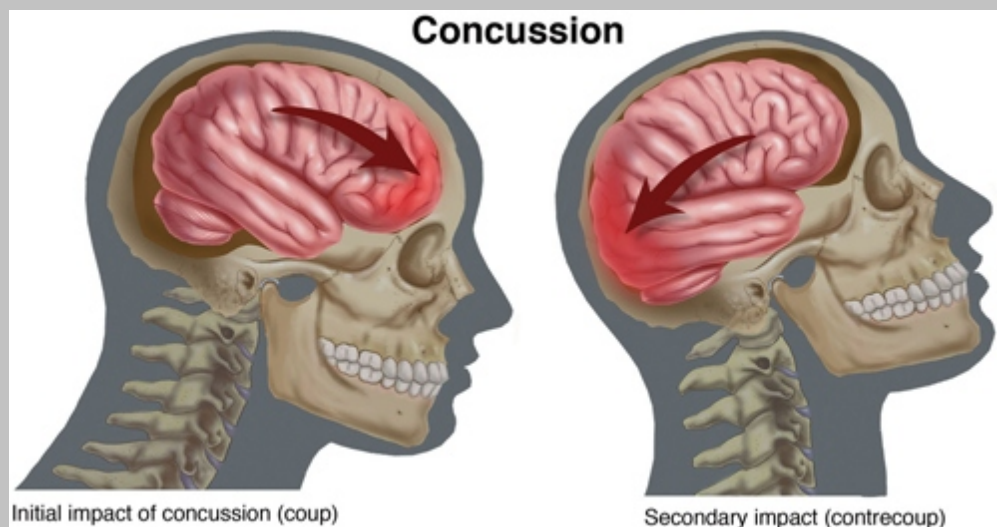
Reduce Headaches

One of our physical therapists will examine you for neck problems following a concussion. Neck injuries can cause headaches and contribute to some forms of dizziness. Your therapist also can assess your back for possible injuries to your spine.

As symptoms due to concussion improve, your physical therapist will help you resume physical activity gradually, to avoid overloading the brain and nervous system that have been compromised by concussion.

It's important that you follow the recommendations of all health care professionals so that you can achieve the greatest amount of recovery in the shortest amount of time.

Please call Pearson Physical Therapy at 308-872-5800 if you have questions on concussions & what we can do for you.



Walking 6,000 Steps a Day May Improve Knee Arthritis

The benefits of walking are widely known and continually proven. Adding to the vast body of literature touting the benefits of walking, a recent study found that walking 6,000 steps a day—the equivalent of 1 hour— may help improve knee arthritis and prevent disability.

In the study, published in Arthritis & Care Research ("Daily Walking and the Risk of Incident Functional Limitation in Knee OA: an Observational Study" – June 12, 2014), nearly 1,800 adults who had or were at risk for knee arthritis had their steps counted over a week using a pedometer. Two years later, the researchers reassessed participants and discovered that for each additional 1,000 steps taken, functional limitations were reduced 16%-18%. Have questions???- call Pearson Physical Therapy at 308-872-5800.



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