

How can treatment help?

Concussion is an invisible injury. Because of this, changes in a person's thinking, emotions, and behavior that are due to concussion may not be noticed or may be blamed on other causes. For example, fatigue or difficulty concentrating may be misinterpreted as laziness or disinterest. Pressures to return to work, sports or other activities before complete recovery may cause a person to minimize the symptoms of concussion. It is common for those experiencing the symptoms of concussion to think they are "crazy".

Treatment begins with a thorough evaluation, which guides the development of a comprehensive treatment plan including recommendations about when it is appropriate to return to work, driving, school, sports, and other activities. Early diagnosis and treatment of such symptoms as headache, dizziness, balance problems, trouble sleeping, and blurred vision can reduce distress and also reduce the risk of re-injury. Through education and therapy, patients and their families are helped to better understand and manage the symptoms of concussion.

When is it safe to return to sports after concussion?

If an athlete suffers another concussion while still recovering from a previous one, the risk of severe problems is greatly increased. Because of this, and because it is sometimes hard to recognize the symptoms of a concussion, the decision to return an athlete to play should only be made by a qualified professional. In general, athletes should not return to play after concussion until they are completely symptom free for a specified period of time. The length of time depends on the athlete's history, the severity of the injury, and other factors.

Where can I get help and more information?

Concussion Management Program & CNY Sports Concussion Center

Improving the understanding and treatment of concussion and sports-related concussion through research, community education, and comprehensive clinical services.

Program Director: Brian P. Rieger, PhD

For more information or to schedule an appointment call: 315-464-8986

Other Resources:

The Brain Injury Association of New York State
Education and support for individuals with brain injury and their families. 1-800-228-8201 or at www.bianys.org

The Centers for Disease Control
offers more information about brain injury at www.cdc.gov/ncipc/tbi



**Concussion Management Program
& CNY Sports Concussion Center**
www.upstate.edu/concussion



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The Concussion Management Program and CNY Sports Concussion Center at University Hospital offer comprehensive evaluation and treatment services for concussion and sports-related concussion. A multidisciplinary team of physicians, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and a rehabilitation counselor works together to help patients and their families understand and manage the symptoms of concussion. Integrated case management services ensure coordination of care and provide assistance with insurance issues.

Myths about concussion. . .

- If you weren't knocked out, then you don't have a concussion
- Everyone gets better in two weeks
- Once the headache goes away, everything will be fine
- Concussion is a minor brain injury with no long-term effects
- If there's no visible injury, everything's okay
- You should play through the pain-get back in the game!

Facts about concussion. . .

- More than a million Americans sustain a concussion each year
- Motor vehicle accidents and falls are the most common causes of concussion
- A concussion doesn't always knock you out
- Symptoms of a concussion can last hours, days, weeks, months, or indefinitely
- Concussion can cause disability affecting school, work, and social life
- Returning to contact or collision sports before you have completely recovered from a concussion increases your chances of long-term problems

What is a concussion?

Concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that occurs when a blow or jolt to the head disrupts the normal functioning of the brain. Some people lose consciousness after a concussion, but others are just dazed or confused. Concussion is usually caused by a blow to the head, but can also occur after whiplash. The most common causes of concussion are motor vehicle accidents, falls, assaults, and sports injury.

What are the symptoms of a concussion?

Concussion can cause a number of different physical, cognitive, and emotional symptoms. The most common ones are listed below. Some symptoms show up right away, but others may not appear or be noticed for days or weeks after injury. The number and severity of symptoms will be different for each person.

Physical Symptoms. . .

- headache
- neck pain
- nausea
- lack of energy and constantly feeling physically and mentally tired
- dizziness, light-headedness, and a loss of balance
- blurred or double vision and sensitivity to light
- increased sensitivity to sounds
- ringing in the ears
- loss of sense of taste and smell
- change in sleep patterns especially waking up a lot at night

Cognitive Symptoms. . .

- difficulty concentrating and paying attention
- trouble with learning and memory
- problems with word-finding and putting thoughts into words
- easily confused and losing track of time and place
- slower in thinking, acting, reading, and speaking
- easily distracted
- trouble doing more than one thing at a time
- lack of organization in everyday tasks

Social and Emotional Symptoms. . .

- mood changes including irritability, anxiousness, and tearfulness
- decreased motivation
- easily overwhelmed
- more impulsive and disinhibited
- withdrawn and wanting to avoid social situations especially if there is a lot of people

How long does it take to get better?

Most people do recover completely from a concussion, usually in several days or weeks. However, recovery can sometimes take up to a year or longer. Also, in some cases the symptoms will improve but will not go away completely. Recovery may be slower in those who have already had one or more concussions.