

CONCUSSION UNPACKED

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

Concussion is the most underreported, under diagnosed and underestimated type of brain trauma, accounting for 90% of all traumatic brain injuries. Despite this epidemic, there is still no universally accepted, evidence-based definition of concussion. Brain Trauma Foundation was funded by the Department of Defense to develop one, using the most current evidence-base. This definition is now accepted by leading organizations, such as NCAA.

Brain Trauma Foundation defines a concussion as a change in brain function as a result of:

- An external force to the head, which
- May or may not be accompanied by temporary loss of consciousness, but is
- Identified in awake individual, with
- Measures of neurologic and cognitive dysfunction.

HOW IS CONCUSSION BEST TREATED?

Evidence demonstrates that the following steps lead to the best outcomes for concussion patients:

- Start cardio exercise as soon as possible after concussion
- Improve sleep quality; Sleeping through the night is key to recovery
- Provide support in maintaining a positive outlook

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL RECOVERY LOOK LIKE?

- Most people with a concussion recover fully after the injury
- 98% of people recover fully in 1-3 months post concussion
- However, not all symptoms improve at the same time
- Everyone recovers differently

WHAT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OFTEN FOLLOW A CONCUSSION?

- Disorientation or concussion immediately after the event
- Impaired balance or nausea
- Slower reaction time
- Impaired attention and memory
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Vision problems
- Sleep problems

WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM SYMPTOMS OF CONCUSSION?

- Fatigue
- Difficulty making decisions
- Forgetfulness
- Sensitivity to light noise
- Nervousness
- Sadness
- Irritability

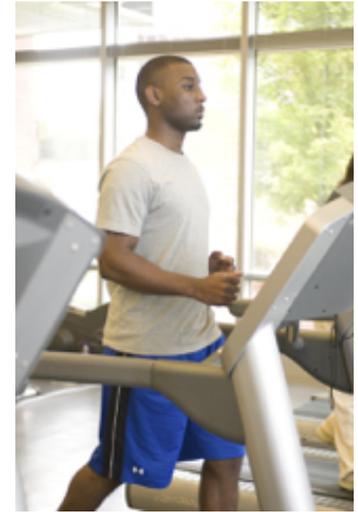
TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Engage in cardio activity

- Begin with moderate intensity cardio immediately following injury.
- Aim for 4-5 times a week for 20-30 minutes.

2. Improve Sleep Quality

- Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep
- Wake up at the same time daily
- Limit naps to 30 minutes
- Minimize noise and light
- Go to bed only when you are sleepy
- Maximize exposure to natural light
- Do not exercise before bed
- Do not drink caffeine 6 hours before bedtime
- Do not drink extra liquid or eat heavily before sleep



Source: CDC, Photography by Amanda Mills

3. Observe Mood Management

Mood changes are common after a concussion. Here are few ways to address the changes:

- Consult with a physician for a referral to psychologist or psychiatrist if needed
- Track your mood and identify triggers that worsen mood
- Pace yourself. Schedule challenging tasks at a time when you feel that you are most efficient and give yourself plenty of time to complete the tasks.
- Practice relaxation strategies (i.e. deep breathing, visual imagery) to reduce day-to-day stress

RESOURCES

Concussion Information

- Brain Trauma Foundation (www.braintrauma.org)
- Brain Injury Association of America (www.biausa.org/concussion)
- Brain Injury Association of California (www.biacal.org)
- Brainline (www.brainline.org)

Vestibular Rehabilitation

- Vestibular Disorders Association (www.vestibular.org)

Find a local support group

(www.biacal.org/brain-injury-support-groups-california.htm)

Last updated: March 2016