

Head Injury/Concussion

You have been diagnosed with a concussion.

This handout is designed to help you recover safely and prevent further injury.

If your symptoms worsen in the first 24 hours after the injury, you may need to seek urgent medical care, so stay with a reliable friend or relative during that time period.

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that alters your brain function. It is common to experience physical symptoms (like headaches, dizziness, fatigue), cognitive symptoms (like difficulty concentrating/focusing, memory deficits), emotional symptoms and sleep disturbances. Most concussions resolve within 7-10 days. Tests such as CT scans and MRIs are most often not necessary to diagnose and treat a concussion.

Common symptoms of concussion:

- o Difficulty concentrating; feeling mentally foggy
- o Difficulty learning and memory problems
- o Vision changes
- o Headaches, especially with stress or physical activity
- o Mood changes (irritability, sadness, nervousness, more emotional)
- o Increased sensitivity to noise or light
- o Dizziness, balance problems, or nausea
- o Unusual fatigue; feeling tired; drowsiness or change in sleep patterns
- o Difficulty in relationships with other people
- o Increased susceptibility to alcohol (becoming drunk more easily)

Following a diagnosis of acute concussion, we recommend a follow-up appointment with your clinician or Primary Care for a recheck in 7-10 days

Warning Signs

If your injury is worsening in any way, including:

- Inability to wake up
- Severe/worsening headache
- Confusion
- Worsening balance problems
- Seizures (convulsions)
- Changes in vision or double vision
- Problems talking or slurred speech
- Repeated vomiting (at least 2 episodes)
- Stiff neck (cannot bend chin to chest)
- Weakness or numbness in any part of the body
- Changes in personality/behavior

... You should seek emergency medical care at your closest Hospital Emergency Department or call 911

HOME CARE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Record your symptoms on the attached "Head Injury Daily checklist" form to monitor your progress.
- **Rest your brain:** Rest for the first 24-48 hours. Avoid activities which increase your symptoms, including texting, video games, computer or television use. You may need to modify your school/work attendance and workload.
- See Return-to-Learn Guidelines on the following page.
- **Rest your body:** For the first 24-48 hours avoid any sports, active recreation or exertion. Then gradually resume normal daily, non-sport activities as tolerated. Avoid pulling "all-nighters" as sleep will help recover. Take rest breaks when you feel tired or fatigued.
- Only take medication as recommended by your clinician. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is the preferred medicine for pain after the injury. Avoid aspirin, ibuprofen and naproxen unless recommended by your clinician.
- Avoid drinking alcohol or taking illicit drugs, sleeping pills, or other substances that change your thinking and/or might worsen your symptoms.
- See Return-to-Sports/Activity Guidelines below

Return-to-Learn Guidelines

Following a concussion, return to studying and the classroom should take place in a stepwise manner. Please note that the rate in which each student progresses will vary and should be individualized.

The general progression is as follows:

- 1) Start with 5-15 minutes of daily activities that do not increase symptoms; gradually increase the time.
- 2) Once you are able to tolerate 30 minutes of cognitive activity, it is ok to resume modified class attendance (modified class attendance options include attending the first 30 minutes of classes, breaks between classes, half-days, etc)
- 3) Once you have returned to class you may increase load as tolerated. If you experience an exacerbation of symptoms, return back to the previous level of cognitive activity where you had no symptoms and try to progress again after 24 hours

Major exams may not be representative of academic ability in the immediate post-concussive period. We recommend no finals/major exams or projects for 7 days following the diagnosis of concussion.

Return to Sports/Activity

Return to Sports/Activity

Avoid re-injury: do not go back to sports or active recreation that can lead to collision, fall or contact until seen by a clinician and your symptoms have resolved.

Return to physical activity and sports should proceed in a stepwise manner, following stages 1-6.

There should be at least 24 hours for each stage.

If symptoms recur, return to step 1 and make a follow up appointment with your clinician.

Stages 1 through 6:

1. Start with gentle daily activities that don't provoke symptoms.
2. Light exercise: stationary biking, walking, or slow jogging for 10-20 minutes. No weight lifting, jumping or hard running.
3. Moderate exercise with body/head movement: moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking; time should be reduced from your normal exercise routine. Light weightlifting may be added at this step as well.

IF all symptoms have resolved, and you have no symptoms with or after exercise at stage 3, you can proceed to stage 4:

4. Non-contact exercise: running, high-intensity stationary biking, your regular weightlifting routine, and non-contact sport-specific drills (for example: shooting, passing, throwing); time should be close to your normal exercise routine.
5. Full-contact training/activity: regular exercise routine or practice. If you participate in sports such as basketball, volleyball, baseball/softball, lacrosse, or any Intramural or Club sports you should be cleared by a medical provider prior to this step.
6. Return to full competition/games.

PERSISTENT SYMPTOMS POST-CONCUSSION

Contact your clinician if you are having worsening symptoms, symptoms that are not progressively improving within 2-4 weeks post injury, or if you have a recurrence of concussion symptoms

Academic and Work Accommodations:

When you are diagnosed with a concussion, you will receive a Concussion Letter that you can use for short-term accommodations for school or work. At your follow-up appointment in 7-10 days, you can speak with your clinician about any additional accommodations you may need related to your concussion.

Check our Website: uhs.berkeley.edu **to learn more about this and other medical concerns.**
For Appointments: etang.berkeley.edu **or call 510-642-2000 | For Advice:** call 510-643-7197

Head Injury Daily Checklist

Instructions: Each day, grade the 22 symptoms listed with a score of 0 through 6. Add the total at the bottom to create your total score for that day.

None	Mild		Moderate		Severe	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

TODAY'S DATE							
Headache							
"Pressure in head"							
Neck Pain							
Nausea or vomiting							
Dizziness							
Blurred vision							
Balance problems							
Sensitivity to light							
Sensitivity to noise							
Feeling slowed down							
Feeling like "in a fog"							
"Don't feel right"							
Difficulty concentrating							
Difficulty remembering							
Fatigue or low energy							
Confusion							
Drowsiness							
Trouble falling asleep (if applicable)							
More emotional							
Irritability							
Sadness							
Nervous or Anxious							
Total Score							

Head Injury Symptom Scale

Patient: After reading each symptom, please circle the number which best describes the way you have been feeling **today**. A rating of **0** means you have **not** experienced this symptom today. A rating of **6** means you have experienced **severe** problems with this symptom today.

Then, answer the questions at the bottom of the form.

Clinician: Review, sign, and send to medical records for scanning.

	None	Mild		Moderate		Severe	
Headache	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
“Pressure in head”	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Neck Pain	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Nausea or Vomiting	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Dizziness	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Blurred vision	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Balance problems	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sensitivity to light	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sensitivity to noise	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Feeling slowed down	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Feeling like “in a fog”	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
“Don’t feel right”	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Difficulty concentrating	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Difficulty remembering	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Fatigue or low energy	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Confusion	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Drowsiness	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Trouble Falling Asleep (if applicable)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
More emotional	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Irritability	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sadness	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Nervous or Anxious	0	1	2	3	4	5	6

Total number of symptoms: _____ of 22

Symptom severity score: _____ of 132

Do your symptoms get worse w/ physical activity? Y / N?

Do your symptoms get worse with mental activity? Y / N

If 100% is feeling perfectly normal, what percent of normal do you feel? _____

If not 100%, why?

Clinician Signature

Check our Website: uhs.berkeley.edu **to learn more about this and other medical concerns.**

For **Appointments:** etang.berkeley.edu or call 510-642-2000 | For **Advice:** call 510-643-7197