



# PATIENT INFORMATION

## What Is a Concussion?

A concussion can happen when you hit your head really hard. It can cause your brain not to work the same as usual for a little while. Of course, many of us have hit our head without getting a concussion because the brain is well protected. Our skulls and a protective fluid that the brain “floats” in is usually enough to keep our brains safe. But there may be times we hit our head hard enough or at just the right angle, that we get a concussion. Feeling dizzy, having trouble seeing clearly, feeling sick to your stomach, not remembering things as well as you did before, or getting more easily confused after you hit your head may be signs that you have a concussion. While you may feel different for a little while after a concussion, most kids feel back to normal after a week or two.

### Common myths and misnomers

- > A concussion is only diagnosable if the athlete was “knocked out”
- > Loss of consciousness is the worst type of concussion
- > Concussions are always graded as mild, moderate or severe
- > Having one’s “bell rung” is normal in collision sports
- > All head injuries should get a CT Scan or MRI to make an accurate diagnosis

### Things you can do to help you get better after a concussion:

- > **Stay safe!** Until you are feeling better you need to make sure you don’t do anything that may cause you to fall or injure your brain again. For right now, don’t do things like riding your bike, skateboarding, sports, or other activities that might lead to a fall or blow to the head. Your doctor will tell you when it’s safe to do these types of activities again.
- > **Take it easy!** Needing more rest than usual after a concussion is normal. So whenever you feel tired, take a break or a short nap. This will help you get better faster.

Of course, sleeping all day isn’t good for you either, as your brain needs some activity to get better. So do try to work your brain by doing puzzles, reading, and going to school. All these things will help you feel better quicker.

- > **Headaches are common after a concussion.** If you do get a headache, tell your parents or a teacher. The headache may just be a signal that you simply need to take a break from what you are doing. Or try lying down with the lights off. This usually helps headaches go away. Sometimes, you may need to take medicine but check with your parents or doctor before taking any medicine.
- > **Break things down into easy steps.** After a concussion, it may be harder to concentrate or pay attention. So, rather than studying for an hour straight, just study for 30 minutes (or less), take a break and then study for another 30 minutes.
- > **Don’t be embarrassed if you can’t remember something!** That is just part of the concussion. Just ask someone for the information or you may need to make a list or write things down to help with your memory. This is just temporary, while you are recovering.
- > **Being a little irritable is normal.** Some kids can be more cranky after a concussion because they are not feeling their best. You may find you get upset about things more easily. If this happens, it may be your brain telling you that you need to take another break. Try to walk away from whatever is upsetting you and find a good spot to sit down and relax.
- > **Things will get better!** Your brain just needs some time to heal after the concussion. Be patient and know that it will get better.

## Going back to school

Your doctor will probably tell you to stay home from school for a day or two after a concussion. This will allow you to get extra rest while your brain heals. But going to school will help you get better too. Once you return to school make sure to tell your teachers that you have a concussion. Tell them if you need a break during the day. If you feel worried or stressed about school, talk to your teacher, guidance, counselor, or parents so they can help figure out what is the best way to help you.

## Getting back to playing sports

After a concussion, take a break from sports and gym class for a little while. It's important to give your brain time to get better. Your doctor will decide when it's safe for you to do these things again. Most kids get back to playing sports again a week or so after they're feeling all better.

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