

Concussion Recovery

A comprehensive approach

Prompt treatment of symptoms, rest and activity modification strategies can reduce risk of post-concussion syndrome

By Dr. Kathryn Snow

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury resulting from a sudden impact to the head or body. The brain's rapid movement within the skull causes stretching and injury to brain cells, leading to a cascade of chemical and metabolic changes that impair brain function. These changes bring on a variety of symptoms that can be mild to debilitating.

Concussion symptoms can be felt by the individual or observed by others. They range from headaches and nausea to dizziness, visual changes, light and noise sensitivities, increased or decreased emotions, changes in personality, and balance issues. While most concussions resolve within 14-21 days, some individuals experience persistent symptoms, known as post-concussion syndrome (PCS), requiring specialized care.

A concussion requires early care to speed recovery

and minimize potential complications such as PCS. By addressing concussion-related symptoms quickly, individuals can improve their chances of a swift and complete recovery.

In the first days after a concussion, it is appropriate to seek professional help to reduce symptoms and promote optimal healing. Early evaluation by healthcare professionals, including physical therapists, can identify the extent of the injury and underlying issues that may require more specialized treatment. Prompt treatment of symptoms, including guidance related to specific rest and activity modification strategies can reduce the risk of developing post-concussion syndrome. Early access to physical therapy interventions, including vestibular and cognitive exercises, help retrain the brain and facilitate faster recovery of function.



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According to a 2022 Legislative report from the Acquired Brain Injury Council of Maine: "Brain Injury is a significant, on-going public health issue that affects all communities in Maine. More than 5,000 Mainers will experience a traumatic brain injury in 2023; this number does not reflect the full scope of the problem as it does not include all acquired brain injuries.... Immediate access to specialized neuro-rehabilitation treatment, access to information and access to care coordination is crucial for positive outcomes."



Effective concussion care targets the specific body systems affected to facilitate recovery

Manual therapy techniques address pain and tension in the neck, upper back, and head.

Cranial and neural mobilization techniques are used to improve mobility and function in the nervous system.

Exercise programs focus on vestibular and oculomotor exercises, cardiovascular activities, and cervical and postural stabilization exercises. Each exercise prescription is tailored to the individual's unique injury presentation.

Education plays a crucial role in concussion management, empowering patients, and caregivers with knowledge to facilitate recovery. Physical therapists provide guidance on rest, activity pacing, symptom management, and gradual return to daily activities. As patients improve, recommendations can be made to include guidance on return to work and school. Customized accommodations help individuals navigate academic and professional responsibilities while ensuring optimal recovery.

For athletes, returning to sports safely is a top priority. The CDC recommends a stepwise return to sport that gradually reintroduces physical activity while monitoring symptoms. This approach prioritizes the athlete's safety and well-being, minimizing the risk of re-injury or exacerbating symptoms.



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Concussion management requires a comprehensive and individualized approach, addressing the diverse needs of each patient. Snow Sport & Spine provides expert physical therapy services in the Midcoast and offers a comprehensive approach to concussion management. Their physical therapy team is committed to guiding patients toward a complete and successful recovery from concussion-related symptoms.

For more information about the concussion program at Snow Sport and Spine, visit snowsportandspine.com/concussion-care. Any questions can be directed to their office 207-230-0700



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