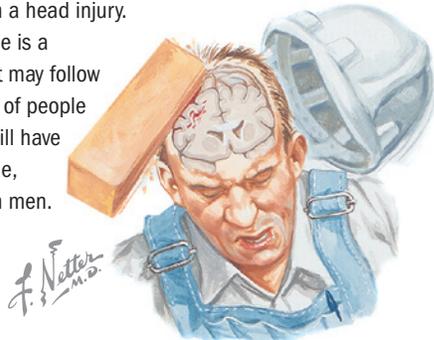


MANAGING YOUR POST-CONCUSSION SYNDROME

A concussion results from a head injury. Post-concussion syndrome is a complicated disorder that may follow a concussion. Up to 80% of people who have a concussion will have post-concussion syndrome, usually more women than men.



Symptoms include:



Mild personality changes



Trouble sleeping, bad dreams



Headache



Poor concentration, tiredness



Treatment consists of watchful waiting until symptoms go away. No medicines can shorten recovery time. Most people recover completely. Analgesics such as acetaminophen, aspirin, and ibuprofen usually help the headache.



What Is Post-Concussion Syndrome?

A concussion is a very brief and temporary loss of consciousness after a head injury. It usually doesn't cause any problems that might be found during a physical examination or tests such as computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Post-concussion syndrome is a complicated disorder that may follow a concussion. It's a collection of different specific symptoms. Up to 80% of people who have a concussion will have post-concussion syndrome, usually more women than men.

What Causes Post-Concussion Syndrome?

The cause is a jarring injury to the brain. The syndrome may also be related to psychological factors.

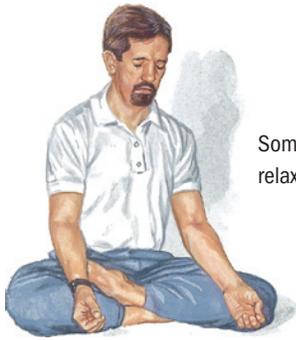
What Are the Symptoms of Post-Concussion Syndrome?

Symptoms include a headache, poor concentration, mild memory loss, irritability, trouble sleeping, bad dreams, dizziness, tiredness, and sensitivity to noise and light. Sometimes mild personality changes occur. These symptoms go away during weeks to months, but they may last for a year or more. People usually improve slowly during this period.

How Is Post-Concussion Syndrome Diagnosed?

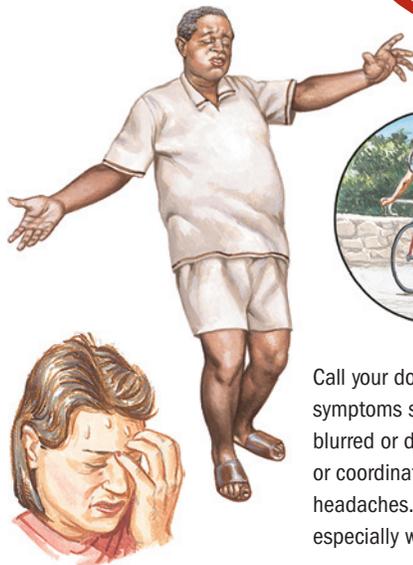
The doctor makes a diagnosis by noting the presence of symptoms in someone who has had a concussion.

Strenuous exercise may make the headache worse. Moderate exercise, however, may make relaxation easier. Exercise may also help with sleep problems by causing just enough fatigue.



Some people find biofeedback and relaxation techniques helpful.

Don't take part in activities that could lead to another concussion while you have this syndrome. Having many concussions may lead to permanent brain injury or even death.



Call your doctor if you start to have symptoms such as increasing dizziness, blurred or double vision, loss of strength or coordination, vomiting, or severe headaches. These symptoms would be especially worrisome.



How Is Post-Concussion Syndrome Treated?

Treatment consists of watchful waiting until the symptoms go away. Most people recover to their normal pre-injury state, usually without permanent effects.

No medicines will shorten the recovery time. Mild analgesics such as acetaminophen, aspirin, and ibuprofen usually help the headache. Medicines may also be needed for depression or anxiety.

Strenuous exercise may make the headache worse. Moderate exercise, however, may make relaxation easier. Exercise may also help with sleep problems by causing just enough fatigue. Some people find biofeedback and relaxation techniques helpful.

Changing work or school areas to minimize the effects of memory loss or trouble concentrating may also be useful.

Support from friends and family to remind people that the condition is temporary may help in dealing with the symptoms.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Post-Concussion Syndrome:

- ✓ **DO** avoid medicines such as stimulants or decongestants. They may make the irritability worse. This condition will take some time to go away, so avoid medicines that might be habit forming. These drugs include narcotics, sleeping pills, and tranquilizers.
- ✓ **DO** avoid making life-changing decisions such as quitting school or changing jobs because of your symptoms.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if your symptoms increase over time or if they have not improved in several months.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you start to have symptoms such as increasing dizziness, blurred or double vision, loss of strength or coordination, vomiting, or severe headaches. These symptoms would be especially worrisome.
- ⊘ **DON'T** do strenuous exercises. Strenuous activity may make the headache more intense. Even though this condition may last for several months, remember that it will go away.
- ⊘ **DON'T** take part in activities that could lead to another concussion while you have this syndrome. It may be that having many concussions may lead to permanent brain injury or even death.

FROM THE DESK OF

NOTES

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following source:

- Brain Injury Association
Tel: (800) 444-6443
Website: <http://www.biausa.org>
- American Academy of Neurology
Website: <http://www.neurology.org>