Rittenhouse
PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATES

Concussion

What is a Concussion

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury caused by a biomechanical force, whether from a direct blow to the head or a hit elsewhere on the body that transmits force to the head. Current international consensus guidelines describe it as a complex process driven by changes in brain cell metabolism rather than visible structural damage.

That distinction matters clinically: a standard CT scan or MRI will usually look normal after a concussion, even though the person is genuinely injured. Diagnosis relies on a clinical exam, a description of how the injury happened, and standardized symptom checklists, not imaging alone.

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms can begin immediately or take hours, even a day or two, to fully appear. They typically evolve over the **first 72 hours** after injury. Most people experience symptoms from more than one category, and the mix is different for everyone.

Physical	Cognitive	Emotional	Sleep
• Headache or head pressure • Nausea or vomiting • Dizziness, balance problems • Sensitivity to light or noise • Blurred or double vision	• Feeling mentally foggy or slowed down • Difficulty concentrating • Trouble with memory • Slower processing	• Irritability • Sadness or low mood • Nervousness or anxiety • Feeling "more emotional" than usual	• Drowsiness • Sleeping more or less than usual • Trouble falling/staying asleep

⚠ Emergency Red Flags

Most concussions are managed safely without a hospital visit. However, some signs can indicate a more severe injury, warranting a medical emergency. **Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away** if you notice any of the following after a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body within the first 24-48 hours from injury:

- Loss of consciousness, even briefly
- Severe headache that keeps getting worse
- Repeated vomiting
- Seizure or convulsion
- Increasing confusion, agitation, or restlessness
- Slurred speech
- Weakness, numbness, or tingling in the arms or legs
- Persistent double vision or loss of vision
- Unequal or dilated pupils
- Severe or worsening neck pain
- Any visible deformity of the skull

Rittenhouse Psychiatric Associates | Concussion Program

We evaluate youth and adults with recent diagnosis or suspected concussions to provide proper treatment guidelines for recovery as early as the same day of injury. Our services aim to return individuals back to school, work, or sport at full capacity as efficiently as possible.

Our Approach

1 Multifaceted Evaluation

- A thorough clinical history, standardized symptom scales, and cognitive, balance, and vestibular-ocular screening to build a complete, individual picture.

2 Individualized Treatment Plan

- A plan built around your assessment findings, goals, and daily demands.
- Tailored guidelines emphasizing active recovery for returning to school, work, or sport.
- Coordinating referrals among specialists, including physical therapy, neurology, neuro-optometrists, and others.

3 Ongoing Monitoring

- Follow-up visits to track recovery with repeated assessments, make treatment modifications as needed, and manage return-to-learn and return-to-sport paperwork

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Recovery
CONCUSSION PROGRAM

Recovering from Concussion

Current international consensus no longer recommends strict rest until every symptom disappears. A short rest period within 48 hours from injury is generally recommended followed by a supervised, gradual return to activity. Latest research has even shown supervised, light physical activity within 48 hours may lead to a faster recovery.

Preventing further injury is a primary concern following a concussion. Repeated impact to the head before full healing may worsen symptoms and further delay recovery. Thus early assessment, diagnosis, and treatment from a concussion specialist is essential to minimizing complications and optimizing recovery.

Behavioral Health Strategies for Recovery

Sleep

After a concussion, your brain depends on overnight sleep to flush out toxic proteins, calm inflammation, and repair damaged neural connections. However, the injury itself disrupts the very sleep your brain needs to heal and thus may prolong recovery. Protecting your sleep, especially in the first days and weeks after injury, is an essential part of your brain's recovery process. Sleep hygiene techniques help to develop consistent sleep routines and facilitate improved sleep quality and duration.

Physical Activity

Research strongly supports gradually reintroducing light aerobic exercise at an intensity that does not significantly worsen your symptoms in order to facilitate progressive recovery. Individualized guidance from a concussion specialist is essential for safely advancing through non-contact physical activity in a controlled manner until baseline tolerance is achieved.

Stress Management

A concussion elevates stress hormones that can worsen symptoms and slow down recovery. Whether getting back to school, sport, or work, using accommodations is key for recovery, and implementing them into school or work can be half the battle. Clear communication with teachers or employers is important to ensuring their use and minimizing stress so you can manage symptoms without falling behind in school or work. Additionally, stress management techniques, such as cognitive behavioral strategies or mindfulness-based approaches, have been shown to reduce anxiety, depression, and post-concussion symptoms while supporting neurological recovery.

Nutrition

Proper nutrition is essential to fuel the repair process in the brain following a concussion. While you may experience less appetite, meeting calorie and protein needs through a well-balanced diet facilitates better recovery. Avoid high-processed, sugary foods.

Hydration

Dehydration can worsen headaches, dizziness, and fogginess. Maintaining adequate hydration supports blood flow to the brain, helping it to better recover. Drink water consistently throughout the day (not waiting until you feel thirsty), monitor urine color (pale yellow indicates proper hydration), and incorporate water-rich foods like fruits and vegetables. Electrolyte-containing beverages that are low-sugar can be helpful if you are sweating or struggling to maintain normal intake.

CONTACT INFORMATION

267-358-6155 x1

Office hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 6:00 pm

Paoli | Center City Philadelphia

To schedule an appointment, you can contact us at 267-358-6155 ×1. Normal office hours are 9:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday to Friday. For any questions or concerns, please call our office, and we will be happy to assist you. Should any questions or concerns arise after office hours, call our office number to leave a message, and we will return your call in the next business day.