

Concussion Signs & Treatment



A concussion is a type of mild traumatic brain injury that results from a bump, blow or jolt to the head. Concussions can also occur from a powerful force applied to another area of the body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. Even a mild bump or blow can be serious and cause significant injury. Loss of consciousness is not required to be diagnosed with a concussion.

Concussion support for schools and organizations

To help ensure the health and safety of student-athletes, our practice developed a sports concussion program to assist athletes, coaches' and parents involved in youth sports. This specialty clinic provides comprehensive diagnostic and rehabilitation services, in addition to important information on preventing, recognizing, and responding to a concussion.

Our team's approach focuses on the athlete and oversight of an active recovery process, recognizing that every athlete is unique and requires individualized treatment plans. Concussion management plans include parallel academic and athletic progressions with active provider management throughout the duration of the recovery process.

Student-athletes undergo comprehensive physical and cognitive exams including various tests of ocular motor dysfunction, balance, coordination, and cognition. This allows our providers to accurately diagnose concussions using standardized, evidence-based protocols, and provide recommendations and/or accommodations for concussed students to facilitate their recovery while minimizing the impact of their injury on academic and sports performance.

The goal of our sports injury and concussion program is to safely return student-athletes to their pre-injury level of functioning on the field and in the classroom.

Signs and symptoms of a concussion

The following signs and symptoms can show up immediately following an injury or may not appear for days following the injury:

- **Headache or complaints of "pressure in the head"**
- **Nausea or vomiting**
- **Balance problems, dizziness or moving clumsily**
- **Double or blurry vision**
- **Sensitivity to light or noise**
- **Concentration/memory problems**
- **Answers questions slowly**
- **Forgets instructions**
- **Confused, sluggish, hazy, foggy or groggy**
- **Appearing dazed or stunned**
- **Mood, behavior or personality changes**

Bellapianta Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine

Concussion Recovery

Concussions take time to heal. No two concussions are alike, and the recovery process varies from one athlete to another.

Rest from physical and cognitive activity is very important. Doing too much or doing nothing at all can often complicate the concussion and lengthen recovery. A gradual return to both cognitive and physical activity, overseen by a specialist with experience in managing concussions, is the recommended course of action.

Following a concussion, the primary concern is avoiding further injury. Symptoms may vary in terms of presentation, duration, and severity; however, further injury to the brain is the biggest risk factor for making a concussion worse.

Important steps for concussion recovery

Sleep. Night sleep is crucial to recovery as it allows for replenishment of glucose, which the brain and body use for healing. An injured athlete should get 8 hours of sleep each night and avoid napping throughout the day. If they are having difficulty sleeping, try 3-6 mg of melatonin 30 minutes to one hour before bed. Create a healthy sleep environment by minimizing exposure to electronics and keeping a cool temperature.

Nutrition. Don't skip meals. An injured athlete should eat three healthy meals or five small meals per day. Meals should be well-rounded, including fruits, vegetables, lean proteins (chicken, fish, nuts, and seeds), low-fat dairy and whole grains (brown rice, quinoa, steel-cut oats, and whole wheat). Processed and high sugar foods should be avoided.

Hydration. An injured athlete should be drinking at least half of their body weight in ounces of water. There is no drink that replaces water. As they start to increase physical activity at the direction of their treatment provider, their water intake should increase as well. Sodas, energy drinks and other caffeinated beverages should be avoided. Energy drinks can increase headaches.

Stress. Management and reduction of stress is beneficial even if it may not seem necessary. Stress consumes energy, increases symptoms, and can prolong recovery. Encourage a consistent daily routine. Communicate with the school regarding a plan for accommodation-implementation and make-up work and develop a list of prioritized tasks. It is important to remember that getting behind in school or work is temporary.

Physical activity. While an athlete is recovering from a concussion, some physical activity is beneficial to the recovery process. As they recover, gradual physical activity recommendations will be made by your provider that are appropriate for their stage of recovery.

EMERGENCY SIGNS & SYMPTOMS of a CONCUSSION

Sometimes, concussions can be accompanied by more serious injuries that require immediate evaluation. If your student-athlete is experiencing any of the following signs and symptoms please take them to the emergency room immediately:

- **Increased drowsiness or cannot be awakened**
- **Headache that worsens and does not go away with rest**
- **Weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination**
- **Increasing confusion, restlessness, agitation or unusual behavior**
- **Repeated vomiting**
- **Slurred speech**
- **Convulsions or seizures**

For more information and appointments:

201.490.4333 or visit bellapiantaortho.com/concussion



Montclair
120 Valley Rd.
Ste. 100
Montclair, NJ 07042

Paramus
140 Route 17 North
Ste. 255
Paramus, NJ 07652

Edison
940 Amboy Ave.
Ste. 104-A
Edison, NJ 08837