

# Emergency Department Discharge Instructions for Concussion

## Patient Education and Follow-up Recommendations

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### DEFINITION:

A concussion occurs when there is a blow to the head or body, with enough force to shake the brain and disrupt how the brain functions. This injury will result in symptoms that may last anywhere from hours and days to potentially weeks and months.

Due to the fact that a concussion is a disruption of brain function, it cannot be measured by neuro-imaging (CT or MRI). In select cases neuro-imaging may be recommended to rule out structural injuries, such as fractures or bleeds, but these kinds of studies cannot diagnose concussions.

### MOST COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION:

- Physical** • Headaches, Light and Noise Sensitivity, Fatigue, Dizziness
- Cognitive** • “Slowed Down or Foggy,” Problems Concentrating or Remembering, Repeating Words
- Emotional** • Irritable, Sad, Nervous
- Sleep** • Trouble Falling Asleep, Sleeping More than Normal, Drowsiness

In addition to symptoms listed above, it is normal for other symptoms to be present throughout the recovery of the injury.

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### HOME CARE:

It is recommended that someone stay with the concussed individual for the next 24 hours and monitor if symptoms increase.

After Leaving the Emergency Department  
**Contact your personal physician or the Emergency Department if...**

- Repeated vomiting
- Severe or worsening headache
- Severe or worsening dizziness

Or any worsening symptom that alarm you

Please follow these guidelines until seen in follow-up by your physician or a physician knowledgeable in concussion management.

- Avoid physical activities (sports, gym, and exercise) and reduce cognitive demands (reading, texting, computer use, video games, etc). The brain is responsible for managing physical and cognitive functions of the body, therefore it is **important to decrease any activity that increases symptoms.**
- School attendance, after-school activities and work may need to be modified to **avoid increasing symptoms.**
- Driving a vehicle or operating any type of machinery is not recommended due to your head injury, until all symptoms have resolved.

Always follow your doctor’s instructions on pain medication. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be used for pain control following a concussion; however, taking anti-inflammatory medication (Motrin/Advil/Ibuprofen) is not advised.

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### RECOVERY:

Because everyone has a different rate of recovery, it is difficult for the Emergency Department Physician to predict when you will be cleared for participation in work, school or sporting activities.

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### FOLLOW-UP:

**Please contact your personal physician or a physician who is knowledgeable in concussion management as soon as possible after leaving the Emergency Department. Follow the above guidelines and report any ongoing or new symptoms when you see your physician.**

#### Additional Resources Concerning Concussions:

Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut  
[www.biact.org](http://www.biact.org)

Centers for Disease Control  
[www.cdc.gov/concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/concussion)

Connecticut Concussion Task Force  
[www.connecticutconcussiontaskforce.org](http://www.connecticutconcussiontaskforce.org)