

Concussion

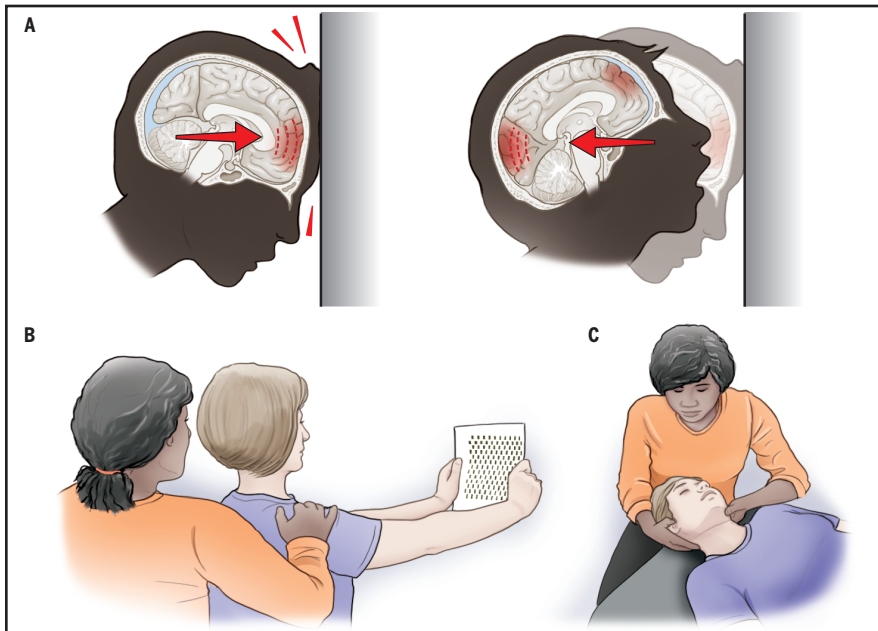
Physical Therapy Treatment After Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

J Orthop Sports Phys Ther 2020;50(4):178. doi:10.2519/jospt.2020.0503

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury caused by a sudden blow or jolt to the head. Any excessive force to the head is considered a “concussive event,” even when a concussion hasn’t been diagnosed. These concussive events can happen during sport or recreation, as a result of a fall or accident, or from an act of violence. Many people recover from these concussive events with rest and gradually get back to normal activities. For others, though, symptoms persist and may include neck

pain, dizziness, headaches, nausea, blurred vision, fatigue, balance problems, problems with exertion, difficulty focusing, or trouble thinking.

The good news is that these symptoms may respond well to physical therapy. To ensure the best possible outcome, getting a thorough evaluation after a concussive event is very important. A clinical practice guideline on the evaluation and treatment of concussion, published in the April 2020 issue of *JOSPT*, emphasizes this point.



NEW INSIGHTS

The guideline on concussion was developed by experts in the field of physical therapy who reviewed the most up-to-date scientific research about concussion. Ultimately, more than 100 papers were used to create this guideline, which stresses the importance of comprehensive evaluations of people who have experienced a concussive event. Evaluation findings then guide treatment plans.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Many people who have experienced a concussive event will recover relatively quickly. A day or two of rest, followed by a gradual resumption of low-risk activities, may be all they need. However, for people who have ongoing symptoms after a concussive event, a physical therapist with expertise and training in this area of rehabilitation can help design a safe return to exercise, daily activities, sport, or work. The physical therapist can perform a comprehensive evaluation that tests for any mobility and movement impairments, trouble with vision or balance, and any other problems you may have with day-to-day function or activities. What is found during this comprehensive exam will guide your treatment plan, which may also involve other health care professionals who can address specific findings.

Such plans should include education about concussions and how you can self-manage, including how to be active and also get the rest you need, the importance of sleep, and knowing signs to watch out for that require follow-up with your physical therapist or other health care provider. Depending on symptoms, your plan might also include exercises for your neck, aerobic exercise, eye and vision exercises, and/or strategies to help you retrain your balance and coordination.

TREATING CONCUSSION. Mild traumatic brain injury, or concussion, is caused by a sudden blow or jolt to the head. Concussion can happen when playing a sport or as a result of an accident, fall, or violence (A). One treatment physical therapists may provide following a concussive event is vestibular-ocular exercise, where you keep your eyes stable and focused on objects as you move your head around to enhance the communication among your brain, eyes, and inner ears (B). Another treatment involves manual therapy to your neck (C).

This *JOSPT Perspectives for Patients* is based on a clinical practice guideline by Quatman-Yates et al titled “Physical Therapy Evaluation and Treatment After Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury” (*J Orthop Sports Phys Ther*. 2020;50(4):CPG1-CPG73. <https://doi.org/10.2519/jospt.2020.0301>).

This Perspectives article was written by a team of *JOSPT*'s Special Features Editorial Board and staff. Deydre S. Teyhen, PT, PhD, Editor, and Jeanne Robertson, Illustrator.

For this and more topics, visit *JOSPT Perspectives for Patients* online at www.jospt.org.



JOSPT PERSPECTIVES FOR PATIENTS is a public service of the *Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy*[®]. The information and recommendations contained here are a summary of the referenced research article and are not a substitute for seeking proper health care to diagnose and treat this condition. For more information on the management of this condition, contact your physical therapist or other health care provider specializing in musculoskeletal disorders. *JOSPT Perspectives for Patients* may be photocopied noncommercially by physical therapists and other health care providers to share with patients. The official journal of the Academy of Orthopaedic Physical Therapy and the American Academy of Sports Physical Therapy of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) and a recognized journal of 35 international partners, *JOSPT* strives to offer high-quality research, immediately applicable clinical material, and useful supplemental information on musculoskeletal and sports-related health, injury, and rehabilitation. Copyright ©2020 *Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy*[®]