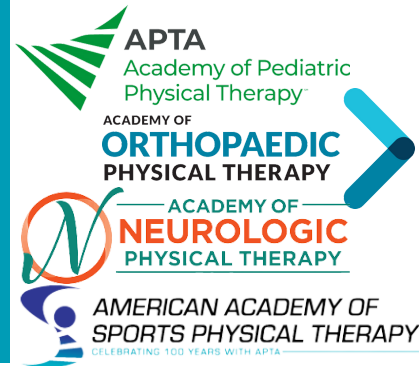


Post-Concussion PT Management:

Evidenced-Based Clinical Practice Guideline

Key Points for Healthcare Providers



Concussion is a major public health concern with high incidence rates (1.6 to 3.8 million/year^{*}) and the potential for long-term effects. Concussive events occur across the lifespan during sport, falls, vehicular accidents, and other activities each year. Physical therapists (PTs) can manage persistent physical symptoms in these individuals.



How Can a Physical Therapist Help?

When concussive symptoms persist, PTs design rehabilitation programs specific to each patient's condition, needs, & goals.

Screening

- PTs screen individuals who have experienced a potential concussive event to determine the need for a comprehensive PT examination.
- PTs screen for symptoms, signs of medical emergency or presence of severe injury requiring referral (e.g. more serious brain injury, cervical spine injury).

Examination for Intervention and/or Referral

- PTs examine the patient to determine & document a need for PT intervention to facilitate recovery from a concussive event.
- Examinations address the patient's post-concussive symptoms related to the cervical spine, the vestibular system, motor & sensory functions, tolerance for exercise, & the patient's goals.
- Comprehensive PT examinations inform the need for referral &/or follow-up with other healthcare providers.

*Langlois et al. J Head Trauma Rehabil.2006;21:375-378

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Physical Therapists' Interventions

PTs individualize rehabilitation programs based on examination results, including the patient's identified impairments, functional limitations, participation restrictions, self-management capabilities, & levels of irritability. These programs address:

- Identified or suspected **motor function impairments** that affect balance & the ability to resume high-level physical mobility.
- Possible **intolerance to exercise** using symptom-guided, progressive aerobic exercise to facilitate return to previous physical activity levels.
- Possible post-concussion **cervical & thoracic spine dysfunction, vestibulo-ocular dysfunction, & complaints of dizziness.**
- **Graded progressions** toward high-level functional performance goals & return to recreational, sport, school, &/or work activities.

PTs educate patients & their families/caregivers regarding:

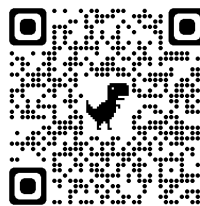
- The various symptoms, impairments, & functional limitations that are associated with concussion.
- The signs & symptoms that need follow-up care with a physician, PT, or other health care providers.
- Strategies for self-management of symptoms, benefits of progressive activity re-engagement, the importance of relative rest instead of strict rest, sleep, & safe return-to-activity pacing strategies.

PTs regularly document symptoms, assess movement-related impairments, & administer selected outcome measures as needed.

For more information:

Evidence Based Clinical Practice Guideline:
Physical Therapy Evaluation and Treatment
After Concussion/ Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

<https://www.jospt.org/doi/pdf/10.2519/jospt.2020.0301>



Contact your local PT:

This brochure summarizes published physical therapy clinical practice guideline recommendations on concussion management. Adherence will not ensure successful outcomes for every patient, nor does it include all proper methods of care aimed at the same results. Treatment plans must use clinical data presented by the patient/client/family, the diagnosis, available treatment options, the patient's values, expectations, and preferences, and the clinician's scope of practice and expertise. Departures from the guideline should be documented in patient records when relevant clinical decisions are made.