



1169 Pembroke Street East, Pembroke, Ontario | Phone: 613-732-9215 | www.active-chiropractic.org | Twitter: @activechiropem

Rehabilitation From a Concussion

Acute Concussion

In the immediate post-injury phase, the only treatment for concussion is rest. Concussion is essentially an energy deficit inside the brain, complete with ion imbalances and blood flow abnormalities. Rest has two very important features when it comes to concussion. First, it keeps the individual from putting themselves in harm's way, thereby avoiding a devastating second injury, until they have sufficiently recovered. Second, rest allows the individual to get a jump-start on their recovery so that any and all energy that is being produced is allocated to attempting to regain the current deficit.

The general consensus within the research and medical community is that anything that could potentially burn energy, such as mental stimulation or concentration as well as physical exercise will delay recovery. Therefore, complete physical and cognitive rest is the best option in the initial recovery period. This means: no school, no homework, no texting, no computer or video games, no television and no physical activity. Often individuals are encouraged to sit in a dark room so that they are even free from light stimulation.

The use of medications should be reserved for extreme circumstances and should only be used if directly prescribed by a physician who is familiar with concussion injuries. Medications that reduce pain may mask the signs of a potentially worsening condition and may also increase the risk of intracranial hemorrhage (bleeding in the brain). Many common pain medications for headaches can also lead to a phenomenon called "rebound headaches" if they are taken for an extended period of time. This may confound things and make it difficult to determine if these are concussion symptoms or simply medication withdrawal symptoms.

The next stages of rehabilitation from a concussion injury involve a gradual return first to cognitive activity and then a gradual increase in physical activity with each stage separated by a period of at least 24 hours. The individual must have no symptoms at any one of the stages in order to be progressed to the next stage. If symptoms are encountered, this is indication of not being ready for the complexity of the task, and the athlete should drop back to the previous stage for a 24-hour period before attempting the next stage again.

Post-Concussion Syndrome

Rehabilitation for patients with ongoing post-concussion syndrome is dependent on where the dysfunctions or symptoms lie. Complete Concussion Management™ has a referral network of neuropsychologists, sports-physicians, physiotherapists, and chiropractors. These referral sources meet various rehabilitation needs of post-concussion syndrome such as vestibular and motor coordination rehab for ongoing balance impairment, visual rehabilitation, cervical proprioceptive training, cognitive behavioural therapy, monitored heart-rate specific exercise programs to increase blood flow and oxygenation to the brain tissue, neurocognitive rehabilitation for problems with memory and attention, or medication if need be.