

The Importance of being Concussion Aware

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a condition that results in a temporary disruption in the normal functioning of the brain as a result of an injury. This injury is often classified as 'minor' and can happen as a result of a fall, road traffic accident or as part of playing sports i.e. football, rugby and hockey.

- Vertigo
- Hearing loss
- Blurred vision
- Light and noise sensitivity
- Diminished taste and smell
- Personality change
- Fatigue and sleep disturbances
- Impaired concentration and attention

Why is Concussion important?

Concussions are important because they can cause ongoing problems with symptoms and brain function. In people playing sports, failure to recognise a concussion can lead to an increased risk of a second injury which can be more serious and very rarely fatal. Thankfully, most people completely recover within about two weeks of the injury and are not left with long-term conditions.

Symptoms

Contrary to popular belief less than 10% of concussions involve a loss of consciousness and these can be so momentary that they can be missed altogether. Concussion affects different people in different ways. The most common signs are short-term memory loss, confusion, dizziness and a headache, but people often report a wide range of symptoms which can include:

What to do after a concussion?

It's also important to ensure regular and close monitoring of an individual for the first 24 to 48 hours post-injury. Although most concussions are mild, the potential always exists for complications, some life-threatening (such as bleeding on the brain or second-impact syndrome). Such complications may occur immediately (minutes to hours) or over several days after the injury. If there are ongoing problems such as headache, memory problems, speech problems, balance problems after a blow to the head then an assessment by a GP or A and E should be sought.

If concussion is suspected, ideally you should be assessed as soon as possible by a doctor or a specialist. Whilst most people recover without any problems, it is important to follow a program of rest and gradual return to activity to maximise recovery.

Management and Return to Activity

The initial management of concussion is focused on a period of relative physical and cognitive rest, meaning that the patient should try to limit activities that stimulate the mind such as excessive use of personal electronic devices, watching television or even driving. Once the symptoms have completely resolved the individual undergoes a programme of gradually increasing stimulation and activity before they are medically cleared to return to all activities.

Around 80-90% of patients with acute concussions have an uncomplicated recovery generally resolving within two weeks.

Mr Hiren Patel is a Consultant Neurosurgeon at The Manchester Institute of Health & Performance's Concussion Clinic.

The Concussion Clinic

The concussion service at The Manchester Institute of Health & Performance brings together specialists from Neurosurgery and Sports Medicine to give expert advice on brain injury. This unique multidisciplinary team allows for best-practice assessment and treatment, and also strives to inform the future of concussion management through research. The clinic is available to non-athletes as well as amateur and professional athletes.

The Concussion Clinic is the first dedicated concussion service in the North West and currently the only private clinic in the UK to offer the Saccodometer Test, which measures rapid eye movement and relays results in real time. This gives consultants a baseline reading and helps them identify the best treatment option.

For more information or to make an appointment please call **0161 641 8300** or visit **www.mihp.co.uk**