

## Concussion Management

Sports safety and concussion prevention have gained increased attention, and for good reason. Even though concussions are fairly common, they pose serious long-term risks if not treated correctly. But many people still aren't sure what concussions are or how to treat them.

### Understanding Concussions

Even though your brain is protected by your skull, it is still vulnerable to injury. If your head violently rocks back and forth, or is hit by another person or object, your brain may slam against the inside of your skull. The impact can damage brain cells and cause brain chemical changes.

Some symptoms occur immediately after the concussion. Others might show up hours or even days later. Short-term symptoms include:

- Headache
- Memory loss
- Confusion
- Loss of consciousness
  
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Slurred speech
- Fatigue

Long-term symptoms include:

- Trouble sleeping.
- Trouble concentrating or remembering things.
- Sensitivity to light and sound.
- Personality changes including irritability or depression.

Concussions can happen to anyone. They are prevalent among athletes, but they also affect people of all ages, from energetic toddlers to older adults. Common causes include:

- A blow to the head during a high-impact sport, such as football, boxing or soccer

- Falling down. Young children and elderly people who have trouble maintaining balance are prone to falls.
- Car accidents
- Bicycle accidents
- Fights or physical assaults

You should be checked for concussion as soon as possible following any head injury – even if you feel fine afterward. If you have a second concussion before your first one heals, your brain may swell rapidly. This is a rare but life-threatening complication called “second impact syndrome.”

Your concussion evaluation could be conducted by a certified athletic trainer, your primary care doctor, a sports medicine physician, an emergency room physician or a neurologist.

## Mercy’s Concussion Clinic

Mercy’s Concussion Clinic identifies concussions, teaches you the signs, and helps determine when your child is ready to get back in the game. Our doctors are trained to recognize even subtle signs of concussion. We’ll make sure you (and your caregiver or support person) leave with a detailed care plan. Treatment may include:

- Overnight observation, in the hospital or at home.
- Plenty of rest. Your doctor will help you decide which physical and mental activities are likely to tire your brain. You will need to limit certain activities for a certain amount of time.
- Orthopedic or Neurologic Physical Therapy to help with cognitive, memory, speech or balance problems.
- Referrals to specialists if you need additional follow-up care.

Mercy’s [sports medicine](#) team is committed to helping people safely enjoy sports and leisure activities. We know sometimes injuries occur, despite our best efforts to prevent them. That’s why we’re equally passionate about helping people understand how to recognize a concussion – and what to do about it. For more information, please call us at 405.755.4050.

**Mercy Sports Medicine – Your Life is Our Life’s Work!**