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**Fact Sheet**

**Mild TBI and Vestibular Dysfunction**



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# **Vestibular Dysfunction after concussion**

# Concussion is a medical diagnosis associated with complaints of physical impairments such as dizziness, headache, and imbalance; emotional dysfunction such as irritability and anxiety; increased symptoms with physical exertion; cognitive difficulty such as difficulty concentrating and remembering, and sleep disturbances such as sleeping too much or poor sleep quality.

**What is the cause of dizziness and/or imbalance after concussion?**

# Normally, our inner ear helps to maintain a stable gaze and balance. This system can be affected by a concussion causing symptoms of dizziness and/or imbalance. This may be because of alteration in the pathway between the inner ear and the brain or because of disruption in structures within the brain or both.

# **How does vestibular dysfunction impact your daily life after concussion?**

People who have dizziness and imbalance walk slower, have a higher risk for falls, and often avoid walking in busy environments. Keeping your eyes on a target, particularly when you are moving your head can be challenging after a concussion. It can be more difficult to multitask during activities that require thinking and moving at the same time such as walking and reading road signs. If untreated, these problems can lead to lower overall activity levels and deconditioning.

# **How can Physical therapy help your vestibular symptoms after concussion?**

# Your physical therapist will perform an assessment that may include examining your visual system, your overall balance, your neck movement, and your activity tolerance. They will assess the severity of your symptoms and develop a plan of care to meet your individual goals. Your physical therapy program may include exercises to retrain your visual system, balance exercises, activities to encourage head movement while walking as well as overall tolerance to exertion, neck exercises, and multitasking activities based on your specific needs. If you perform your prescribed home exercise program regularly and accurately, you will be able to return to your normal activities faster.

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