



# The Wellness Family

Dr. Whitney Keeps You Informed

## Concussion at All Ages

When we hear the word “concussion” we tend to think of athletes or risk-takers, however, the truth is that anyone can get a concussion. Typically, the result of a blow to the head, it’s important to understand what a concussion is, how they occur and who is at risk.

### Defining Concussion

According to the Mayo clinic, “a concussion is a traumatic brain injury that alters the way your brain functions. Effects are usually temporary but can include headaches and problems with concentration, memory, balance and coordination.”

Concussions are usually caused by a blow to the head but it is possible that they can occur when the head and upper body are violently shaken. While these injuries may cause a loss of consciousness, many do not, and so some may have a concussion and not even realize it.

### About Concussions

The brain is a soft organ with almost the consistency of gelatin that is surrounded by spinal fluid and protected by the skull. Normally, the fluid around the brain acts like a cushion and protects the brain from hitting the skull. However, if a blow to the head is hard enough, or the body is hit hard enough, the brain may hit the skull and be damaged.

Due to its consistency, if the brain hits the skull hard enough it can cause damage to blood vessels or nerves in the brain, thus resulting in a concussion. While the injured person may claim to feel fine, it’s important to look for signs of a concussion.

It’s also vital to ensure that they take care to avoid another injury until the concussion has been relieved. An already damaged brain is highly susceptible to further and potentially even worse injury should there be another blow to the head or upper body during the time it takes to heal. This is why, when playing organized sports, a player will be discouraged from returning to play after a head injury without first being seen and examined by a medical professional. You should note that your Family Wellness Chiropractor is equipped to diagnose a concussion or potential brain injury.

### Causes of Concussion

The first and most common cause of concussion tends to be sports injuries, which is why it’s so important to make sure that our children are wearing the proper gear when participating in organized or school sponsored sporting events. For instance, contact sports such as football and boxing. However, this is not the only cause of concussion.

Any blow to the head or upper body can result in a concussion including but not limited to: physical altercations or fights, playground injuries, automobile accidents, bicycling accidents, falling down stairs or other falls from a significant height especially if there is a bump to the head while falling or landing, etc.

When considering sports remember that not all sports include physical contact, but all sports have the potential to result in a concussion. For example, sports and physical activities such as baseball, skiing, snowboarding or other activity.

In 2009, there were almost 500,000 sports-related head injuries treated in hospital emergency rooms in the United States.



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### Symptoms of Concussion

It is common for a blow to the head to result in a concussion, while not always causing a loss of consciousness. Many will claim to feel “fine” not being aware that they are dealing with a concussion so it’s important to know the typical signs:

- Loss of consciousness
- Memory problems
- Severe headache
- Blurred vision
- Trouble walking
- Confusion and saying things that don’t make sense
- Slurred speech
- Drowsiness or feeling sluggish
- Unresponsiveness
- Sensitivity to light or sound

These symptoms are a sign of a possible concussion and anyone displaying any of the above symptoms after a blow to the head or upper body should be taken immediately for examination by a Family Wellness Chiropractor or other healthcare professional.

## Symptoms of Concussion in Children

A lot of times a child cannot correctly express how they're feeling. It is absolutely vital that a child who recently suffered a blow to the head or upper body be immediately checked for a concussion if they display any of the following symptoms:

- Irritability or crankiness – will not stop crying or cannot be consoled
- Tiredness or listlessness – especially if they are limp or unresponsive
- Changes in eating – will not eat or nurse
- Changes in sleep patterns – this can include difficulty sleeping or sleeping too long
- Changes in the way the child plays
- Changes in performance at school
- Lack of interest in favorite toys or activities
- Loss of new skills – for example, toilet training
- Loss of balance or unsteady walking
- Nausea or vomiting

Many of the above symptoms may also be signs of a vertebral subluxation. If your child is displaying any of the above symptoms and an allopathic physician tells you that your child is fine (or that they do not have a concussion), be sure to contact your Family Wellness Chiropractor. Clearly a child with one or more of the above symptoms is not "fine" and needs to be checked.

## Concussion Recovery

While recovering from a concussion be aware that the brain is extremely susceptible to further injury. Do not risk another blow to the head or upper body when diagnosed with a concussion; you could potentially end up with a worse concussion or further damage.

Additionally, it is not unusual to experience symptoms of concussion during recovery that include but are not limited to: irritability, sensitivity to light or sound, trouble concentrating and mild headaches. Be sure to speak with your doctor if these symptoms worsen or become unbearable.

## Avoiding Concussion

It goes without saying that you should be well-advised regarding contact sports or risk-taking. Those who wish to participate in these activities need to use the proper equipment and protective gear; and demonstrate common sense.

Wear a helmet for any activity that can cause a fall or impact to the head or neck. Examples of such activities include: bike riding, ATV riding, skateboarding, skiing or snowboarding, inline skating, horseback riding and most sports. Helmets do not just help protect the skull from injury but the brain as well. Noting, however, that if the brain is jarred inside the skull, even a helmet is not going to help avoid a concussion.

While not possible to protect a child from all injury, there are things that can be done to reduce a child's chances of getting a concussion. They include: use child car seats and booster seats correctly, teach a child to ride a bicycle safely, teach children to be safe around streets and cars, keep a child safe from falls, teach children to use playground equipment safely and train children on the importance of proper gear and how to prevent injury from sports and other physical activities.

## The Chiropractic Factor

Your Family Wellness Chiropractor is trained in how to gently and properly adjust a child's spine. While a blow to the head or neck may not actually cause a concussion, it very well may have created a slight misalignment to the vertebra in the spine resulting in a vertebral subluxation (nerve interference that can interrupt the signal from the brain that goes down the spinal cord and out to the muscles, organs and glands).

If your child has shown any signs of concussion or unusual behaviors but your general physician or pediatrician says that they are "fine", contact your Family Wellness Chiropractor for a screening. Even the most minor misalignment may affect your child and early detection is the key to recovery.



Dear Patient,

Dr. Whitney is dedicated to providing you with the absolute best in family wellness care. So take a moment today to discuss with your Family Wellness Chiropractor any concerns you may have regarding your family's overall health and wellness.

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