

**Dartmouth College Health Service**

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**About mTBI**: Mild traumatic brain injury, also known as “concussion” is a form of acute brain injury that can be caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head. Sports injuries, car accidents and falls are common causes of concussions. In most cases, additional testing (such as CT or MRI) is not necessary and does not show any signs of injury. The effects of concussion can have serious long-term effects. If the effects of a concussion persist or you start to develop new and/or worsening symptoms you may need additional evaluation.

**What to Expect**: The signs and symptoms of concussion vary. Although most students recover quickly, symptoms can last for a few days, weeks, months, or even longer. Symptoms may include:

* Cognitive – difficulty thinking clearly, feeling slowed down, difficulty concentrating, difficulty remembering new information
* Physical – fatigue, headaches, dizziness, vomiting, balance issues, light or noise sensitivity, difficulty sleeping, problems with eye movements, neck pain, difficulty sleeping
* Emotional – irritability, sadness, anxiety, or heightened emotions

**What to Do**: It is important to rest and help your brain heal following a concussion. Ignoring symptoms and trying to “tough it out” often make the symptoms worse and can prolong recovery. You can:

* Rest your brain and your body for a few days. Avoid exercise or academic work during this period.
* After a few days of rest, begin light activity and gradually reintroduce regular activities (except sports) that do not significantly worsen symptoms. Try these activities twice daily to gauge how your body responds. Start with 10 – 20 minute “study sprints” or low-impact physical activity such as walking or a stationary bicycle. If symptoms worsen significantly, stop the activity and try again later in the day after a bit more rest.
* Sleep. Your body will require more sleep than usual and will recover best with a regular sleep schedule. Significant fatigue is normal for 3 – 4 days after mTBI.
* Do not drink alcohol. Alcohol and other drugs may slow your recovery and put you at risk for further injury. Avoid caffeine as this may impact sleep patterns. A regular schedule of nutritious meals will help to support recovery.
* Limit exposure to screens and noisy environments, but don’t isolate. Social supports are important during your recovery.
* It is OK to use acetaminophen or ibuprofen as needed for headache. Please contact Dartmouth College Health Service (DCHS) if your headache symptoms are changing or worsening significantly.
* Once you are back to regular non-sports activities (including school), you can begin return to sports as follows:
  + Light aerobic exercise (try 10 – 20 minutes, increase as tolerated)
  + Sport-specific exercise
  + Non-contact training drills
  + Full contact practice
  + Return to sport
  + If symptoms worsen significantly, return to prior level for a day and try again

**Supports:**

* Students are advised to contact their professors and Sarah McKinney in the Dean’s Office ([Sarah.McKinney@Dartmouth.edu](mailto:Sarah.McKinney@Dartmouth.edu), 646-2980) to alert them of their diagnosis. We recommend you meet with the Dean’s Office and your faculty to discuss accommodations that may be needed.
* Varsity or MRUG athletes should contact Katelyn McPherson ([Katelyn.McPherson@Dartmouth.edu](mailto:Katelyn.McPherson@Dartmouth.edu), 646-9378) or Tracy Purcell ([Tracy.A.Purcell@Darmouth.edu](mailto:Tracy.A.Purcell@Darmouth.edu)). Tracy or Katelyn will help coordinate with the Dean’s Office as needed.
* Graduate students are encouraged to contact their program administration for support as follows:

Thayer: Holly Wilkinson @ 646-3483

Tuck: Sally Jaeger @ 646-2190

Geisel: Taryn Weinstein @ 650-1243

Graduate Studies: Gary Hutchins @ 646-2107

**When to Call for Help**: Proceed to the DHMC Emergency Department for any of these symptoms:

* Vomiting 3 or more times
* New severe headache or worsening of current headache
* Seizure
* Trouble walking or talking
* Vision changes
* Weakness or numbness in part of your body
* Loss of bowel or bladder control

**Follow-up**: Please follow up at DCHS in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ days to review your symptoms and progress.

Call DCHS @ **646-9400** for non-emergent questions or concerns or to speak with a nurse. Additional contact information and appointments are also available on our website <https://students.dartmouth.edu/health-service/>

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