

PERSISTENT POST-CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS? PHYSIOTHERAPY CAN HELP!



By Derek Purvis

Concussions happen to more people than you may think. They can happen in sports, at work, in a car accident, or even a slip and fall at home. Many people are anxious about having a concussion, but the good news is that most people have a full recovery within a few weeks without any treatment. Seeing your Family Doctor or Sports Medicine Doctor for guidance is often all you need to do to ensure you are on the right path to recovery. There are times when recovery is extended more than the first few weeks and when an individual is still experiencing symptoms, they are termed “persistent post-concussion symptoms”. This just means that you may need some extra help on your way to recovery.

The persistent post-concussion symptoms that you feel are often not caused by the actual concussion but by one or more other factors, and often need a team approach to getting you better. Physiotherapists are a key part of this team, and can help assess and treat some of the many causes of persistent post-concussion symptoms. Symptoms like headaches, neck pain, dizziness, imbalance, and vertigo. In many patients when these causes are properly identified and treated, symptoms resolve and you get back to normal life.

So how can Physiotherapy help persistent post-concussion symptoms?

Vestibular Physiotherapy

The vestibular system is your body’s balance system. Impairments will affect your head and eye coordination, your tolerance to movement, and your ability to stabilize your vision during head movements. This can cause dizziness, imbalance, nausea, and even fatigue. Some individuals may also experience a condition called Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (or BPPV) which creates an intense spinning sensation. A Physiotherapist trained in

Vestibular Physiotherapy will be able to identify which impairments are causing your symptoms, provide in-clinic treatment, education, and provide you with a home program.

Cervical Spine Treatment

Concussions will almost always involve a whiplash injury to the neck at the same time. Dysfunction in the neck can lead to persistent headaches, dizziness, nausea, imbalance, and of course neck pain. Physiotherapists are well equipped to help resolve your neck pain with tools including manual therapy, exercise, acupuncture, and modalities.

Exercise

Knowing how much exercise is okay after a concussion can be tricky, but studies consistently show that the right amount of exercise early on in recovery can actually speed recovery time and reduce the chances of developing persistent post-concussion symptoms. Gone are the days where we lock ourselves away in a dark room. The right amount of exercise can be very helpful in recovering from persistent symptoms and getting you back to sports, work, or life. Physiotherapists are trained to guide you through the right amounts and types of exercise you need. It is all part of us putting together a recovery plan for you.

There are many pieces to the puzzle in treating persistent post-concussion symptoms, and it sometimes takes a multi-disciplinary, team approach to help you recover. Physiotherapists trained in concussion rehabilitation are an important part of this team and here to help you on your road to recovery!

Derek is a Physiotherapist trained in Vestibular Rehabilitation and Concussion Rehabilitation and practices at Windsor Park Physiotherapy. You can find Derek and may other great Physiotherapists in the “Find a Physiotherapist” section at www.mbphysio.org

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