



When to Refer to *Sports Neuropsychology* for Concussion Evaluation and Management

Sports Neuropsychologists are doctors with advanced training not only in general brain injuries, but additional, specialized expertise in *concussive* brain injuries. Concussions are very different from other kinds of brain injuries and, thus, require a different set of knowledge and skills. They don't routinely include hours of formal testing, but they do use formal assessment of symptoms and other pre- and post-injury factors, working together with your healthcare team.

Immediately Post-Injury

Examination & screening by *medical provider* to rule out more serious brain injury.

Also refer to Sports Neuropsychologist if

- K-12 student
- There is a pre-injury history of migraine, anxiety/mood disorder, attention or learning problems, or poor sleep
- Multiple prior concussions
- Individualized school or workplace adjustments needed from outset
- Trauma is associated with the injury
- There is significant worry, fear, or concern!

Within first week post-injury

Symptoms should begin to improve within a few days if managed well.

No more than 1-2 days of rest at home is recommended.

Also refer to Sports Neuropsychologist...

- Return to school or work can't be tolerated, even with supports, after 1-2 days rest
- For INDIVIDUALIZED supports
- Sports Neuropsychology can assess barriers to recovery & symptom triggers and coordinate referrals to related providers for further assessment if/as needed

As recovery continues

If recovery slows or is not likely to be complete in 3-4 weeks

BEFORE meds or "cognitive therapy" are prescribed

Also refer to Sports Neuropsychologist for non-medical strategies and individualized supports

The brain itself doesn't need rehab. Individualized lifestyle adjustments, behavioral supports and interventions, coordinated care and sometimes skilled PT and OT, are more effective AND evidence-based! Sometimes meds help, but not always, and most don't need them.

When is recovery complete?

- A full work/school day is resumed without any symptoms
- Return to pre-injury symptom levels
- A 5-7 step gradual return-to-play or physical activity has been completed without symptoms, as directed by PT, AT, or other medical professional

Is a Sports Neuropsychologist still needed?

If there are any questions regarding future risks of repeat injuries for return to sport, or long-term effects, or if formal neurocognitive testing wanted.

Marla Shapiro PhD, NCSP, DBSM is a Sports and Developmental Neuropsychologist with a Diplomate in Behavioral Sleep Medicine. A Fellow of both the National Academy of Neuropsychology and Sports Neuropsychology Society, she manages concussions for athletes of all ages, from pee-pee sports to pro's, as well as children, adolescents, and adults who sustain concussions in every day life. She works with clients and related providers to identify and manage barriers to recovery to facilitate return to classroom, workplace, and playing fields as quickly and safely as possible.

