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## **Concussion Self-Care Tips**

Have you or someone you know been recently diagnosed with a concussion? If so, you may be asking what are some strategies to manage symptoms while also staying at home? Good news – there is plenty you can do at home to promote recovery!

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that causes a temporary disruption in brain function and communication. Common symptoms include headaches, dizziness, fatigue, visual disturbances, anxiety, irritability, changes in sleep patterns, and trouble concentrating. In the early stages following injury, mild to moderate rest is best followed by a progressive return to activity.

### **6 Easy Self-Care Strategies for People with a Concussion**

Follow this helpful list of concussion therapies that you can do almost anywhere. Like any new therapy program, we highly suggest that you first consult with a [certified concussion physical therapist](#) or a doctor before trying these out at home.

#### **Stay Connected and Keep Yourself Busy**

Not all activities have been canceled! These can lessen the sense of isolation you may be feeling.

- Audio books
  - I like “[Racing to the Finish: My Story by Dale Earnhardt Jr.](#)”
- Podcasts
  - [@Concussion\\_Doc](#) is a good resource
- Coloring and crafts
- Gardening
- Baking and cooking
- Puzzles
- Board and card games

- Scavenger hunts
- Online support groups
  - [Pink Concussions](#)
  - [Brain Injury Association of Virginia](#)
- Send happy mail
- Call or video chat with a friend or family member

## **Pace Yourself Throughout the day**

Working remotely and online school means more screen time, increasing cognitive demand.

- Take frequent breaks
- Print out assignments when possible
- Work in quiet areas to reduce distractions
- Wear blue light blocking lenses
- Use blue light filters on devices
- Practice upright posture
- Use a planner and lists
- Work on one thing at a time

## **Incorporate Daily Exercise into Your Lifestyle**

Sub-symptom aerobic exercise can help improve brain oxygenation and reduce recovery time. Keeping the neck gently moving can help with potential whiplash injury and [cervicogenic symptoms](#).

- Daily walks
- Track steps and set a daily goal
- Stationary bike
- Utilize fitness apps and YouTube – many are offering discounts or promotion codes
  - [ChoosePT Home Exercise](#)
  - [Nike Training Club](#)
  - [FitOn](#)
- Light postural exercises
  - Shoulder blade squeeze
  - [Corner stretch](#)

- Gentle cervical stretching and active range of motion
  - [Chin tucks](#)
  - [Trapezius stretch](#)
  - [Levator scapulae stretch](#)

## **Find Your Inner Zen**

These uncertain times are stressful, so take control of your mental health too!

- Practice mindfulness and meditation
  - Body scan
  - Guided imagery
- Apps
  - [Calm](#)
  - [Headspace](#)
  - [Down Dog](#)
  - [Cosmic Yoga for kids](#)
- Journaling Ideas
  - Goals
  - Gratitude
  - Problem solving

## **Maintain Proper Sleep Hygiene**

These habits can help facilitate neurological recovery and boost energy and mood.

- No electronics 1 hour before bed
- No caffeine 4 hours prior to bed
- Try using a sound machine or binaural beats
- Follow a consistent sleep routine
- Limit naps

## **Maintain a Healthy Diet**

Due to the brain/gut connection, modifying your diet can help improve your brain health and reduce inflammation.

- Adequate hydration
- Reduce intake of red meats, refined sugars, and processed foods

- Enjoy good fats such as coconut oil, avocados and flaxseed and omega-3 fatty acids like salmon and herring
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables

It is important to know that each concussion is unique, but whether you are a student, teleworking or a parent/caregiver, these self-help tips should aid in symptom management while at home. Be sure to seek medical attention if symptoms persist or worsen. Virtual healthcare or an in-clinic evaluation may be a great option while social distancing to allow for a detailed assessment and individualized plan of care..

This article was written by Paige Carroll, PT, DPT, CBIS

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**Sheltering Arms** Physical Rehabilitation Centers offer a network of comprehensive rehabilitation and support services in Central Virginia.

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