

WINTER UPDATE

CONCUSSIONS

The topic of Concussions and Post-Concussive Syndrome has been widespread in the media in recent years. What is important to note is that this is not a condition restricted to professional athletes - our youth are also at risk.

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is described as "a complex pathophysiological process that affects the brain, induced by traumatic biomechanical forces resulting in the rapid onset of short-lived impairment of neurologic function that resolves spontaneously. Concussion may be sustained by a direct blow to the head, face, or neck or by a blow to somewhere else on the body that transmits an impulsive force to the head. Most concussions do not cause a LOC (loss of consciousness) or cause only a transient (ie lasting seconds) LOC." (Yeats et.al., 2012).

The diagnosis of concussion is difficult, particularly among children and adolescents because their neurological system is still developing; therefore tests of memory, balance, and concentration can vary widely even amongst a healthy population. This variability in test results emphasizes the need for pre-injury testing in order to:

- make the appropriate diagnosis of concussion;
- rank the severity of the injury;
- determine treatment protocols;
- measure recovery rates; and
- determine back-to-play status.

Response to Care

The recovery from injury also varies from one athlete to the next, and at times, the severity of the impact does not match the duration or severity of the injury. Answers to this variability in outcome lie in:

1. Understanding the neuro-chemistry of concussion
2. Chemical insults in the body are handled by the immune system
3. Mechanical and chemical insult to the brain alter the function of pathways in the nervous system
4. the gut/brain connection.



The Role of Chiropractors

Since concussions occur as a result of trauma, the effects must be managed concurrently with other possible effects of trauma, which may include:

- whiplash;
- subluxations;
- neck strains;
- facet syndromes; and
- muscle spasms.

Chiropractors are some of the best-trained professionals to deal with these types of sequelae and should be involved in the health team treating concussion injuries.

Prevention, pre-injury status, post injury assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should all be key components when considering the big picture of concussion injury in our children and young athletes.

Adapted from the "Canadian Chiropractor, June 2012". View the full article here:

<http://www.canadianchiropractor.ca/patient-care/concussion-and-post-concussive-syndrome-2397>



HEADS UP ON HELMETS

Helmets are not just for extreme sports. Many fun seasonal activities, such as bike riding, blading, skiing or skating, require the use of a helmet. They are designed to protect your head and can reduce the risk of an injury by 30%. There are such a wide variety of activities requiring helmets that it is important to pick the right one for the right job. There are two basic types of helmets: single-impact and multiple-impact. Here are a few tips that will help you select a helmet that is appropriate for the activity that you are doing.

Picking the Right Helmet

Ski and snowboarding helmets are designed to protect your head against ONE impact accident. After it has been in a crash, it should be replaced even if there doesn't appear to be any damage. Hockey helmets are designed to withstand several impacts. Helmets that are designed to protect the back of the head should be used for winter sports.

Don't Settle for Second-Hand

While it may be tempting to buy a second-hand helmet or use a hand-me-down, keep in mind that plastic helmets become brittle and weaken with age. Make sure you know the answer to two questions:

1. Has this helmet been in a crash?
2. Is it more than 5 years old?

Look for Safety Certification

Older helmets may not meet current safety standards. It is important to look for the safety certification by CSA (Canadian Standards Association), or CPSC (Consumer Products Safety Commission).



The Right Fit

Proper fit is just as important as choosing the right helmet. It should comfortably touch your head all the way around, and be snug enough to stay firmly in place. Your helmet should sit level on your head and ride as low as possible to protect the sides of your head.

Head injuries can be devastating, and you should never skimp on getting the right helmet for your needs - remember, you can't put a price on your brain!

HEADACHES

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Headaches are more common in adults, although they can develop at any time in life. Headache symptoms usually begin gradually. In fact, the sudden onset of severe headache may signify a serious problem and requires immediate medical attention.

Common headache is often described as achy, dull or throbbing pain. It typically begins at the base of the skull/upper part of the neck and may radiate into the eye(s), temple or other locations; they may be felt on one or both sides of the head. Often loud noises or bright lights may make them worse; some patients may become nauseated or experience odd smells, sounds or sights before and during the headache attack.

How Are Headaches Evaluated?

Early diagnosis and treatment are important in identifying a serious underlying cause for your headache. In most cases, an in-depth history and physical examination can help determine if your symptoms are related to an easily treated problem, or if it is more serious.

Your doctor can use other tests that reproduce symptoms of your headache to help develop a specific management plan for your condition, or refer you to another healthcare provider. X-rays, lab tests and advanced imaging (eg. MRI) may be necessary. Your doctor may ask you to complete a headache diary, recording:

- day and time of headache
- location of headache
- what headache feels like
- what you were doing when headache began
- duration of headache
- what makes headache feel better or worse
- anything else you notice before, during, or after the attack

What Causes Headache?

Primary headaches do not result from other health conditions. Common primary headaches include:

- tension headache: from problems in neck muscles
- migraine headache: from changes in blood vessels in the skull
- cluster headaches: grouped together over weeks at a time
- sinus headaches: associated with allergies and/or sinus infection
- headaches from poor vision.



Secondary headaches result from other causes or conditions: head injury, concussion, blood vessel problems, high blood pressure, or from side effects of medications, infections in head or sinus or elsewhere in body. Rare headaches include tumors, aneurysms, other abnormal growths in the skull, and toxic substances in the blood.

How Can Headaches Be Prevented?

Muscle tension headaches can often be avoided by maintaining proper posture and neck movements while performing normal activities:

- avoid slouching
- avoid reading with your neck bent forward
- keep your computer monitor at eye level
- take frequent breaks from reading and working on the computer
- try a low-fat, high-complex carbohydrate diet

What is the Treatment for Headaches?

Headache treatment is cause-related. Chiropractors often treat patients with tension-type headaches and headaches caused by problems with the joints and muscles in the neck.

- Joint Manipulation/Mobilization of the neck, with stretching and strengthening exercises
- Massage and other forms of soft-tissue treatment
- Acupuncture
- OTC pain relievers (should not be for long-term use)

More serious causes of headache require aggressive treatment by the appropriate medical professional.



PRODUCT SPOTLIGHTS: ULTRAFLOA HEALTH DEFENSE



Ultraflora Health Defense is a **probiotic** ("friendly" bacteria) containing specific targeted strains that have been shown to **affect immune function and the common cold**. In clinical studies, this unique probiotic blend was shown to:

- reduce the number of cold episodes
- reduce the number of sick days
- reduce symptom severity, including: runny nose, sore throat, cough, etc.

UltraFloraHealth Defense is effective with just one capsule daily. It may be used in conjunction with *Immucore* to increase immune support especially during cold and flu season; *Immucore* contains a blend of mushroom extracts, high potency vitamin C, zinc, selenium, and Vitamin D.



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