CONCUSSIONS AND HEADACHES

It is not uncommon to experience headaches after a concussion, but they should quickly decrease with appropriate lifestyle adjustments as you recover. If they don’t start to feel better within a week or are particularly severe, follow-up with a neurologist with expertise in post-concussion headache management.

You can also minimize symptoms with the following tips from The American Headache Society and other sources:

Reduce Stress - Stress can lead to an increase in headache; conversely, relaxation and stress management can help to reduce tension headaches. We also know that relaxing and pulling back can be particularly stressful for high-achieving students (and adults!) – sometimes it can be helpful to consult with a behavioral-psychologist who can provide some instruction in relaxation strategies. Check out the App store, too, for relaxation and deep-breathing apps for an added boost.

Get good sleep – CDC surveys indicate that most high-school students do not get enough sleep on a regular basis – 8½ - 9½ hours of consecutive sleep for most adolescents is the recommended amount, and "catching up" on the weekends does not count! If falling asleep, or getting enough sleep, are problems, aim to establish a very regular schedule by going to bed and waking up at the same time each day. Discontinue daytime naps if falling asleep is a problem (substitute with a leisurely walk instead). Shut down electronics an hour before bedtime – definitely no screens in bed – and try to stop studying an hour before bedtime, too, substituting relaxing activities like a warm bath to help the body to wind down and prepare for sleep. When trying to change sleep habits, be patient – it takes time, but with consistency, changes will come.

Stay hydrated - dehydration can cause headaches, too. Recommended fluids for teens and adults are 8, 8 ounce glasses of water per day, with more if you are active or out in the hot sun.

Nutrition counts too - low blood sugar can also trigger a headache. Eat well-balanced, regular meals 3 times/day. There is absolutely no scientific evidence that “carbo-loading” speeds recovery, so be sure to include all food groups. Try to avoid headache triggers, like too much caffeine or caffeine withdrawal, or the rapid rise/fall in blood sugar that comes from eating too much sugar at once.

Additional headache triggers – eyestrain or other visual triggers (particularly with co-occurring balance and vestibular problems), fatigue, rebound headaches from overuse of pain relievers, skipped meals, too much sleep, musculoskeletal strain or injury.

Be sure to take breaks while working to avoid headache recurrence as recovery progresses.

When symptoms do not improve, let us know so that we can help you get better and to provide appropriate referrals based on your specific history, symptoms and needs.