

The Emotional Consequences of Concussion

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Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=3513>

Dr. Jeffrey Barth: There are, oftentimes, emotional sequelae related to, or “consequences,” of mild head injury and concussion. In sports we don't see it as often immediately following a blow, if it's one single concussion. However, it still can occur there and actually after multiple concussions it's very common. What are those consequences? Well, they are irritability, that can relate to depression, and often fatigue that's associated with that as well. Some people would say you can have the same types of emotional reactions to a concussion that you see in post-traumatic stress disorder.

At the high school and college level, again, what we mostly find is the irritability and so on and as people become kind of grouchy and stressed. And of course, the way to treat that is reduce the stress. So we, of course, don't recommend that people go right back to exercise. Again, we titrate that in or bring it in slowly. We also try to work with school systems, for example, to reduce the curricular load a little bit and make people aware that this person has had an injury even though they look perfectly normal and are acting perfectly normally, and give them time to recover.

And if we talk about those recovery curves of 5 to 10 days, typically, they should be over it relatively quickly. Sometimes though that irritability lasts for awhile and again with our younger players, as I said, this can go for 6 to 10 times longer. That should be just watched by the parents and again, reduce stress, get plenty of rest. Sleep is really good for those sorts of things.