## WHEN CAN I RETURN TO DUTY?

- You should be able to return to duty when you are symptom free and have had enough time to recover, but recovery is different for each person and depends on the nature and severity of the injury.
- Your health care provider will let you know when it is safe to return to duty.

## WHY DOES CONCUSSION AFFECT MY RETURN TO DUTY?

- Symptoms after a concussion can affect your performance, placing the safety of you or your unit at risk.
- These temporary symptoms resolve faster when your brain gets rest, so it is important for you to take time to recover.
- If you sustain another concussion before healing from the first one, your recovery might take longer.

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U.S. Navy photo by Chief Petty Officer Robert Benson

# Acute Concussion Educational Brochure

### Information for Anyone Newly Diagnosed with a Concussion

U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Francisco V. Govea II

## WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a head injury from a hit, blow or jolt to the head that:

- briefly knocks you out (loss of consciousness)
- makes you feel dazed, like you had your bell rung (alteration of consciousness)
- affects your ability to remember the event (post-traumatic amnesia)

A concussion is also known as mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI).

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## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

- Most people fully recover from concussions.
- Immediately or soon after the injury, you may have disorientation, headaches, dizziness, balance difficulties, ringing in the ears, blurred vision, nausea, vomiting, irritability, sleep problems, and/or attention, concentration or memory problems.
- Recovery is different for each person, but symptoms typically improve within hours and resolve completely within days to weeks.

## WHEN SHOULD I SEEK HELP?

Return immediately to your health care provider if your symptoms worsen or if you experience any of the following:

- Worsening headache
- Slurred speech
- Unsteady on feet
- Seizures
- Double vision
- Weakness or numbness in the arms and legs
- Decreasing levels of alertness
- Disorientation/confusion
- Unusual behavior
- Repeated vomiting
- Something just isn't right

## WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- Maximize downtime and rest.
- Sleep is key to your recovery. Get seven to eight hours of sleep.
- Protect yourself from another concussion by avoiding contact sports, combatives, etc.
- Let others know that you have had a concussion so they can watch out for you.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Follow your health care provider's instructions and be honest about your symptoms.
- Avoid alcohol and drug use. Alcohol and drug use significantly slow down recovery.
- Avoid caffeine, energy drinks and other "energy-enhancing" products that might interfere with sleep.
- Don't take any medications, including over-the-counter ones, unless instructed by your health care provider.
- Avoid sleeping aids and sedatives unless your health care provider advises you to take them.
- Don't do physical work, heavy lifting or exercise until cleared by your health care provider.
- Limit activities that require intense concentration, such as writing reports or playing video games.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sergeant Jennifer Brofer

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