Lots of rest may not heal a concussion faster, study says

By Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.07.15
Word Count **647**



In this photo taken Aug 27, 2010, Evan Nolte, 16, a high school basketball player, is pictured in his home in Milton, Georgia. Nolte suffered a concussion the previous season which had him sequestered to his house for two weeks, exercising as little brain stimulus as possible. Photo: AP Photo/John Amis

A concussion can happen when someone takes a hard knock to the head. The concussion can lead to headaches, feeling dizzy or confused, or mood changes. Rest and quiet are the most important steps to recovery.

Sometimes, doctors want to “cocoon” a child who has a concussion. That means they are kept at home in a dark room with no TV, music, bright lights or smartphones. Sometimes the injured child is cocooned for up to five days.

A new study has found that this strict treatment is not necessary. Researchers at the Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin in Milwaukee compared the results of treating teens for two different lengths of time. They found that resting for one or two days was enough in most cases. After that, the injured young person can slowly return to normal activities.

Strict rest of up to five days for adolescents — young people and teens — did not help them recover faster, the study found.

Worries Caused More Symptoms

The Children's Hospital researchers studied 88 young people — ages 11 to 22 — who had suffered mild concussions. Forty-five of them rested for one to two days and then slowly returned to their normal activities. Forty-three teens were restricted for five days: they were kept in quiet rooms, and not allowed to go to school.

The study found that the longer rest did not help kids. It might have even made them feel worse.

The researchers were "startled" that the strict rest "was not making a difference," said Dr. Danny G. Thomas of the Children's Hospital.

"(We were) more startled when kids who were resting longer began complaining of more symptoms," Thomas said. The doctors believe that worries over missing schoolwork and being kept away from friends led to those kids feeling more symptoms.

Different Kinds Of Concussions

Getting rest is helpful after a concussion, but there has not been much research on just how much rest is best.

Experts do know that too much physical or mental activity too soon after a concussion can mean that it takes longer to get better. The symptoms of a concussion fade slowly. It is more like a light dimming than a light being switched off, Thomas said.

Concussions are caused by brain trauma — often being hit on the head hard while playing sports.

Neurons are nerve cells in the brain that exchange information. With a concussion, chemicals enter and leave the neurons, draining their energy. The neurons do not work correctly again until their energy levels come back to normal. This takes time.

If someone has a concussion, they might feel dizzy or confused. They also could feel anxious or have mood changes. There might be problems with vision, bad headaches, nausea, or neck pain.

Different types of concussions have different effects. Also, different people have different symptoms.

"The Study Was Well Done"

"I thought the study was well done," said Dr. Micky Collins, a concussion expert at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC). "More research like this is needed."

Collins said research at UPMC has identified six types of concussions. Each type requires a special treatment plan designed for the patient by a concussion expert.

One thing is clear from the study and UPMC research: “Never restrict the adolescent to a dark room,” Dr. Collins said. “You’ll never hear us say, ‘Sit in a dark room and get better.’”

Dr. Kevin M. Kelly, who runs concussion services at Allegheny General Hospital, said the study was a good one. The researchers collected so much information, that it was “heroic,” the brain doctor said.

It is important to remember that one treatment is not always right for all patients, Kelly said. He recommended personalized treatment and “brain rest” for most children.

Kelly said that a bigger study is necessary. He suggested hospitals and universities could work together to develop guidelines on how to treat different types of concussions.

Quiz

1 Which sentence from the article does NOT support the idea that longer rest may not be helpful to kids with concussions?

(A) They found that resting for one or two days was enough in most cases.

(B) Strict rest of up to five days for adolescents — young people and teens — did not help them recover faster, the study found.

(C) The doctors believe that worries over missing schoolwork and being kept away from friends led to those kids feeling more symptoms.

(D) Getting rest is helpful after a concussion, but there has not been much research on just how much rest is best.

2 Read this sentence from the article.

> *Different types of concussions have different effects. Also, different people have different symptoms.*

From this sentence, what is one conclusion that can be made about concussion treatment?

(A) Although there are different types of concussions, they often have the same symptoms.

(B) There should be a uniform approach to treating concussions that covers all of the symptoms.

(C) The approach to treating a concussion should be different, based on the type and symptoms of the concussion.

(D) Although the symptoms vary across types of concussions, there is one treatment that is effective for all of them.

3 Read this sentence from the article.

> *The researchers collected so much information, that it was "heroic," the brain doctor said.*

What does the word "heroic" mean in this sentence?

(A) The information found made the researchers seem like heroes.

(B) The researchers found such a quantity of information, it must have taken a hero's effort.

(C) The researchers felt like heroes because of the amount of information that they gathered.

(D) The researchers had to go through many hard times to gather the information, which makes them heroes.

4 Which paragraph from the section "Different Kinds Of Concussions" BEST explains what a concussion is and why rest is needed to make it better?

Answer Key

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Paragraph 11:
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