

Guideline for Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and Persistent Symptoms

3rd Edition - for adults, +18 years of age



Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation
Fondation ontarienne de neurotraumatologie

Patient Version

This guideline has been created to help with management of concussion/mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI). It is only for management for adults over 18 years of age. The guideline can be used by patients when speaking with healthcare providers about their care. It covers getting a diagnosis, managing symptoms in the early phase (acute) and management in the longer recovery phase (persistent symptoms). It is based on up-to date, quality research evidence, the expertise of providers and the input of patients.

10) Balance, Dizziness and Vision Problems

Balance problems and dizziness

Balance problems and dizziness are very common after a concussion/mTBI.

Symptoms include:

- loss of balance,
- a sense that your surroundings are spinning, or that the floor is not level (called “vertigo”),
- nausea,
- rapid eye movements when moving suddenly, rolling over in bed, or looking up.

Episodes of loss of balance or dizziness usually last less than a minute, but they can happen several times a day and can be quite disabling. For some people, dizziness can cause anxiety or depression.

If you are having loss of balance, nausea, or dizziness, you should have some tests as soon as possible. Tests will look at your sense of balance, coordination, vision, and hearing. A test called the Dix-Hallpike test might be done,

There are different types of treatments depending on the symptoms you are having. Treatments can include:

- vestibular rehabilitation (also called “VR”)
- Epley maneuver
- canalith or particle repositioning within the ear.
- balance exercises targeted at your specific symptoms.

If your balance or dizziness symptoms are causing you to have anxiety or depression, your doctor may also prescribe treatment, such as cognitive behaviour therapy or medication.

Vision problems

Vision problems after a concussion/mTBI can include:

- blurred or double vision,
- abnormal eye movements,
- partial loss of vision, and
- sensitivity to light, computer or tv screens.

If you have vision problems, your doctor will do a series of tests to diagnose the problem. Depending on the results of the tests, you may need to see a specialist, such as an ophthalmologist or an optometrist with specialized rehabilitation training.

There are different types of treatment, depending on the type of problem you have. You may undergo vision rehabilitation or be prescribed special glasses, such as reading glasses, prism glasses, and tinted glasses.