Postconcussion Syndrome: Care Instructions

Overview

Postconcussion syndrome occurs after a blow to the head or body. Common symptoms are changes in the ability to concentrate, think, remember, or solve problems. Symptoms, which may include headaches, personality changes, and dizziness, may be related to stress from the events surrounding the accident that caused the injury.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Pain

- Rest is the best treatment for postconcussion syndrome.
- Do not drive if you have taken a prescription pain medicine.
- Rest in a quiet, dark room until your headache is gone. Close your eyes and try to relax or go to sleep. Do not watch TV or read.
- Put a cold, moist cloth or cold pack on the painful area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the cold pack and your skin.
- Have someone gently massage your neck and shoulders.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. You will get more details on the specific medicines your doctor prescribes.

Stress

- Try to reduce stress. Some ways to do this include:

    - Taking slow, deep breaths.
    - Soaking in a warm bath.
    - Listening to soothing music.
    - Having a massage or back rub.
    - Drinking a warm, nonalcoholic, noncaffeinated beverage.

- Get enough sleep.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet. A balanced diet includes whole grains, dairy, fruits and vegetables, and protein. Eat a variety of foods from each of those groups so you get all the nutrients you need.
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Try relaxation exercises, such as breathing and muscle relaxation exercises.
- Talk to your doctor about counseling. It may help you deal with stress from your accident.

When should you call for help?

Watch closely for changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- You do not get better as expected.
- Your symptoms, such as headaches, trouble concentrating, or changes in mood, get worse.

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