

MANAGING VISION CHANGES FOLLOWING CONCUSSION/MILD TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence



U.S. Navy Photo by Chief Mass Communication Specialist Michael O'Day

WHY AM I HAVING VISION PROBLEMS AFTER A CONCUSSION?

You are able to see the world around you because of a complex process that takes place between your eyes and your brain. Your eyes take in information from your surroundings, and your brain — which is connected to your eyes — processes and makes sense of the information. Vision depends on your eyes and brain performing their unique functions properly. If there is damage to either one of them during concussion, you can have vision problems. A concussion can affect vision by damaging the eyes themselves, muscles that surround the eyes, or parts of the brain involved in vision. Even small vision changes can affect your daily life by making it difficult to read, drive, exercise, and carry out work or school activities.

WHAT ARE SOME POSSIBLE VISION PROBLEMS AFTER A CONCUSSION?

- Blurred vision
- Bumping into objects or falling frequently
- Difficulty focusing
- Difficulty reading or frequently losing your place when reading
- Discomfort and dizziness in busy environments
- Double vision
- Dry eye
- Eye discomfort or pain
- Headaches with visual tasks
- Sensitivity to light

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM EXPERIENCING CHANGES IN VISION AFTER CONCUSSION?

Many people experience visual problems during the first 1–2 weeks after a concussion. However, it usually resolves on its own without the need for treatment. If your symptoms continue, contact your primary health care provider. They may refer you to an eye care provider, such as an optometrist, ophthalmologist, neuro-optometrist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist for treatment.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MANAGE VISION PROBLEMS?

1. Increase print and image size

Use a magnifying device to make objects bigger. Increase font or image size when using electronic devices.

2. Keep your eyes moist

Use over-the-counter eye drops to lubricate your eyes and relieve any dry eye.

3. Minimize bothersome light sources and glare

Minimize bright fluorescent and blue light. Use natural light when possible. To minimize glare, cover surfaces that reflect light — such as attaching an anti-glare filter to your computer screen.

4. Reduce visual strain

Keep all items needed to complete a task together in one place. Put items you use often, such as house keys, in a consistent location. Try to organize your eye movements by following a visual pattern when searching for an item in a room, for example looking up and down and then left to right.

5. Take frequent breaks

Follow the 20-20-20 rule — every 20 minutes look at something that is 20 feet away for 20 seconds. This will give your eyes a break when reading, watching television, or using electronic devices.

6. Try vision exercises

Speak with your primary health care provider before starting these exercises to ensure they are safe for you.

Exercise	Frequency <i>To be completed by health care provider</i>	Description	Instructions	
Pencil Push-Ups	<input type="text"/> sets <input type="text"/> repetitions <input type="text"/> times daily	This exercise improves the ability of your eyes to work together when focusing on an object that is close by.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hold a target — such as a pencil — in front of you at arm's lengthSlowly bring the pencil towards your nose, watching the target carefully and continuously with both eyesWhen or if you see two pencils, stop moving the pencil towards youTry to make the pencil clear (non-blurry and one pencil). You may have to move the pencil out slightly until you see one pencil againFocus on the pencil tip for 5–10 seconds, then push it back out to arm's length	
Saccades	<input type="text"/> sets <input type="text"/> repetitions <input type="text"/> times daily	This exercise improves the ability of your eyes to move quickly when shifting your focus from one object to another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hold two fingertips in front of you at arm's length, about 12 inches apartKeep your head still during the exercise, only move your eyesMove your eyes as quickly as possible from point to point	