

IS IT SAFE TO DRIVE AFTER A CONCUSSION?



Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of TBI hospitalizations for adolescents and persons 15-44 years of age.

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

STATS

→ Driving is a complex process involving coordination of concentration, attention, visual perception, insight and memory, which can all be affected by concussions.

→ 26% of concussion patients continue to experience neuropsychological deficits once asymptomatic.

DRIVING BEHAVIORS

Even when asymptomatic, those with a prior concussion experienced 32% more lane excursions than the healthy control group.

Asymptomatic concussion patients exhibited poor vehicle control when navigating curves.

- Lane curves are the 2nd most fatal driving maneuver according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Patients diagnosed with a concussion took an additional 25 feet to stop a car and were .45 seconds slower to identify traffic conflicts.

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER MANAGEMENT

83% of physicians felt that concussion put individuals at a greater risk of a motor vehicle crash yet the majority (51%) **do not regularly counsel their patients about driving.**



“Currently, no widely adopted return to driving protocols exist.”

- American Medical Society for Sports Medicine

99% of nurse practitioners reported relying on symptom-based evaluation rather than using standardized tools.

82% of physicians reported not using standardized testing to determine whether an individual is ready to return to driving.

PATIENT PERCEPTION

38% of concussion patients feel “very unsafe” driving.

56% of those diagnosed with a concussion did not refrain from driving at any point following their concussion.

- 31% indicated they did not refrain from driving because a healthcare provider had not advised them to do so.

RETURN TO DRIVING RECOMMENDATIONS

Concussion patients should refrain from driving until cleared by a healthcare provider and should be given guidance on extra precautions to take when returning to drive after a concussion:

- minimize distractions
- minimize night driving
- drive short distances
- avoid following cars closely

REFERENCES

- https://sigma.nursingrepository.org/bitstream/handle/10755/622747/1_Klein_T_p82148_1.pdf
- <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/53/8/495>
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