

4 Characteristics of a Good Concussion Clinic

A document of the Canadian Concussion Collaborative (CCC)
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WHO SHOULD USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed to help people who have persistent symptoms of a concussion (symptoms that are not clearly improving after a period of seven to 10 days) find a good concussion clinic. Many sport medicine clinics and concussion clinics offer concussion management and treatment. Before you choose one, be sure that care is provided by licensed health care practitioners and ask the questions described in this document.

The answers to these questions will tell you whether the clinic provides good concussion care:

- “Yes” to questions 1 to 3 means they are likely providing up-to-date concussion care.
- “No” to any question means that the clinic does not follow best practices. They should make it clear that their approach is not supported by current guidelines.

QUICK CONCUSSION FACTS

A concussion is a brain injury. It can happen when a blow to the head, face, neck or body makes the brain suddenly shake or jerk inside the skull. You can have a concussion and not lose consciousness. Signs and symptoms of a concussion include:

- Headache
- Neck pain
- Dizziness
- Irritability
- Blurred vision
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sensitivity to light or noise

After a medical evaluation, most concussions will heal gradually with an initial period of mental and physical rest, followed by gradual return to mental and physical activity. If the symptoms of a concussion do not clearly improve within 7 to 10 days, a personalized concussion care plan should be developed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK A CONCUSSION CLINIC



Does the clinic have a medical doctor?

The treatment of patients with persistent concussion symptoms may involve many health care professionals, but a physician should ideally do the initial assessment of patients and should direct patient care and provide final medical clearance to return to sport, school and work-related activities. Clinics offering concussion care should have timely access to physicians with training and experience in concussion. These physicians should be identified by name.

WARNING! Proceed to an emergency department if any of the RED FLAGS listed in the [“Concussion Recognition Tool”](#) (CRT5) are observed:

- Neck pain or tenderness
- Double vision
- Weakness or tingling/burning in arms or legs
- Severe or increasing headache
- Seizure or convulsion
- Loss of consciousness
- Deteriorating conscious state
- Vomiting
- Increasing restlessness, agitation or combativeness

QUESTIONS TO ASK A CONCUSSION CLINIC



Does the clinic have a team of licensed health care professionals?

In addition to a medical doctor, a team approach is helpful to evaluate and manage concussions more effectively. A good clinic has access to licenced professionals from several health care disciplines, either on-site or by referral. If needed, these professionals help provide mental and physical evaluation, education, rehabilitation and advice about getting back to work, school and sport. They provide complementary expertise from their health care disciplines and should work with the medical doctor to design a personalised treatment plan. The professional teams present at these clinics may include: athletic therapists, chiropractors, neuropsychologists, nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists.

Does the clinic follow the most up-to-date standards of care for managing a concussion?

Recommended standards of care are updated every few years by groups of experts in documents like the "[International Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport](#)." The clinic should follow the most up-to-date standards to ensure good concussion care.



What tools, tests and recommendations is the clinic using?

The clinic should be using the tests recommended in the most current "International Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport." The clinic should perform tests to evaluate many different components including patient symptoms, mental functions, balance, cervical spine, mood, response to exercise and neurological (brain) functions.

The use of pre-season (baseline) neuropsychological testing, including baseline computerized neurocognitive testing, is not recommended in children and adolescents.

Concussion clinics and health care providers that are advertising "certification" for concussion management isn't a guarantee of proper concussion care. Private certification is an unregulated practice and is not endorsed by the Canadian Concussion Collaborative. To identify a good concussion clinic, ask the four questions described in this document!

BEWARE IF:

- **The clinic charges access fees or more for concussion treatments:** Clinics should have standardized time-based fee schedules regardless of the injury being treated.
- **The clinic's website or publicity offers testimonials:** This is an unethical practice for most health care professions.
- **The clinic claims to use a treatment that is proven to improve recovery from concussions:** No single treatment has been shown to improve recovery from all concussions.



Visit the CASEM website for additional [concussion tools and resources](#).