



A publication of the Student Health Advisory Council and the Student Health Service

UD STUDENT HEALTH SERVICE  
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## Concussion care

Don't get a swelled head.

You and a friend are out riding bicycles when she loses her balance. She and the bicycle crash to the ground. She cries out in pain as her head hits on the asphalt. You run to her side. She's moaning and, for a few moments, doesn't seem to be responding to your voice. You're worried about a head injury — maybe even a concussion.

A concussion is an injury to the brain that is caused by a blow to the head. It can cause loss of consciousness or amnesia. Even if you're not knocked-out, it can be serious if there is damage to the brain.

Most concussions are not serious, but, like all head injuries, they require prompt medical attention. A neurological evaluation must be done. If a doctor suspects there is brain injury, he/she may order a CAT scan or an MRI. Observation of the patient over several hours is usually necessary. If there's going to be trouble, symptoms will usually occur within 24 hours.

*Continues on back*



## Fatigued? Maybe you need some sheep.

**Fatigue** is caused by many factors, but only rarely does it represent a serious medical problem.

Irregular sleep patterns commonly cause fatigue among college students. The human body requires eight hours of sleep per night, and more importantly, the body prefers a set routine. So even if you average 8 hours of sleep per day, if you sleep 5 hours one night and 11 the next night, your body will not "feel as rested."

Ever wonder why that "power nap" didn't give you more pep? When a body is chronically sleep deprived, it maximizes the deepest stage of sleep. When you nap, the sleep cycle quickly accelerates to a deep stage of sleep. You may awaken from this deep sleep still feeling groggy. But you protest, "I can't fall asleep before 2 a.m. and then I have to get up for an 8 a.m. class." Unfortunately, this common scenario is largely due to a factor you can't control — your age. People in their teens and early 20s typically run on a "night owl" schedule. It's physiologic and will change as you age.

Evaluate your sleep patterns and determine if good sleep hygiene — going to bed at a set time and arising at a set time — will alleviate your symptoms. In the meantime, you can tell your parents the doctor said it is normal to sleep until noon during the semester break.

Other factors that can influence your energy levels include diet and exercise. Excessive calorie restriction and skipping meals contribute to fatigue. Food is fuel for the body and depriving

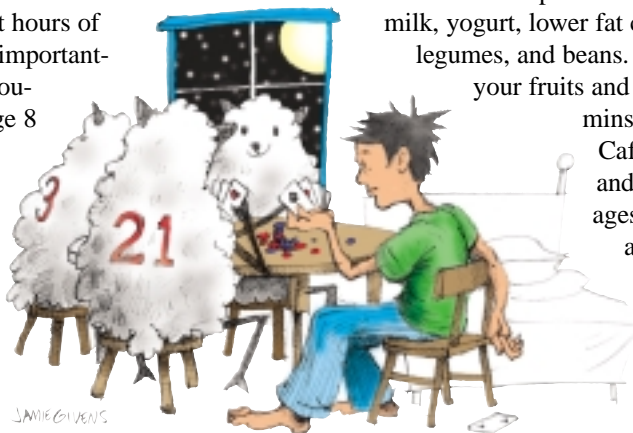
your body of the right fuel can cause your energy to wane. Complex carbohydrates like whole grain bread, oatmeal, and bran are good choices combined with lean protein sources like skim milk, yogurt, lower fat cheeses, poultry, legumes, and beans. And don't forget your fruits and vegetables for vitamins and fiber.

Caffeinated beverages and alcoholic beverages can cause fatigue and should be avoided. A balanced diet is especially important to keep you fit for exercise. Moderate

exercise on a regular basis will give you more energy. Train too hard and it may wipe you out.

Medical conditions that may present with fatigue include infections such as mononucleosis, strep pharyngitis, influenza and colds. Chronic conditions such as allergies, asthma, anemia, and underactive thyroid disease can cause fatigue. Psychiatric disorders such as depression and drug abuse may disrupt sleep and cause fatigue. Warning signs that should prompt you to see a doctor include:

- sore throat
- painful swallowing
- chronic nasal congestion/postnasal drip
- difficulty breathing
- hair loss
- significant weight changes (greater than 10%)
- loss of interest in recreational activities
- fatigue impairing your daily functioning in school, work and social life



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# Pap test screening:

Don't let "test anxiety" keep you from getting a regular exam.

A Pap test is a screening test that examines the cells of the cervix in order to detect abnormalities that could potentially lead to cancer. The Pap test or smear was named after Dr. Papanicolaou, who developed the test in 1940. Having an annual Pap test has been shown to reduce the rates of cervical cancer by approximately 70% from the rate of the pre-screening era. The test is not 100% accurate, however, having both false positives and false negatives, but accuracy has been increased with newer developments.

With the conventional Pap smear, cervical cells are placed on a glass slide. Disadvantages of this type of Pap smear are:

1. 80% of the cells collected are discarded on the sampling device.
2. Cervical cells may be obscured by other cell types.
3. Cervical cells may not be adequately preserved.
4. Cervical cells may be clumped together, overlying one another.

Enter the liquid-based Pap tests — ThinPrep<sup>RM</sup> and AutoCyte<sup>RM</sup> Paps. The University of Delaware Women's Health Department is currently using a liquid-based Pap smear, which resolves these problems, improving the specimen quality. The cervical cells, in this type of Pap, are rinsed into a liquid rather than placed on a slide.

Advantages of the liquid-based Paps are:

1. 100% of the cells are collected into the vial.

2. A thin layer of cells is clear of obscuring cells (blood and mucus).
3. The sample is immediately preserved.
4. The filtration process disperses and randomizes cells.

All sexually active women or women over the age of 18 should get a yearly Pap smear. Women at increased risk for cervical cancer are those:

- Who have more than one sexual partner or a sexual partner who has had more than one partner
- Who have had genital warts (HPV) or a partner who has genital warts



- Who are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)
- Who use tobacco
- Who began having sex at an early age
- Who use birth control pills
- Whose mother took diethylstilbestrol (DES) while carrying them (DES was given years ago to prevent miscarriage)

- Who have had radiation therapy
- Who are being treated with drugs that suppress your immune system

As you can see the Pap smear is a valuable screening test. Often the Pap is normal. In those instances when it is not, do not be alarmed. Many things can cause the cells of your cervix to appear abnormal. Many of these conditions either resolve on their own or with treatment. Your clinician will review your Pap smear with you and make recommendations for further care.

## Concussion Care *Continued from front*

Early symptoms of a mild concussion include:

- Vomiting more than twice
  - Severe headache
  - Confusion, restlessness, or irritability
- These symptoms may be difficult to evaluate if the patient has been drinking or taking drugs.

Later symptoms of a serious concussion are:

- Slurred speech
- Seizures
- Unequal pupils
- Inability to stay awake

It is very important not to take any medication after a head injury unless instructed by your doctor. Acetaminophen (Tylenol<sup>TM</sup>) may be taken for the headache only with a doctor's approval.

It's a good idea not to be alone for the first 24 hours after a concussion. Hang out with friends who know you well and could detect changes in your condition. If you want to go to sleep, have someone wake you up every 2 hours to make sure your condition is not worsening. You should be able to wake up as you normally do and answer questions such as your age, birth date, current U.S. president, etc. If your friend suspects a decline in your condition, they should call your doctor or an ambulance.

Repeated concussions can spell big trouble. It is very important to avoid future head injuries. Remember to wear helmets, fasten seat belts, and avoid reckless behavior.

## Stomach cramps got you running? Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

IBS is a recurrent, non-cancerous, non-inflammatory disorder of the intestines. The cause is not completely understood; however, multiple factors cause abnormal spasms of the intestines. It affects 10–20% of the adolescent and under-40 adult populations with a 2:1 female predominance. It is usually recurrent and can substantially impair a person's quality of life if not addressed.

Symptoms include: crampy lower abdominal pain that is relieved with a bowel movement, an alteration in bowel habits leading to diarrhea, constipation or both at varying times, nausea, bloating, increased gas or belching, or the sensation of having one's fill soon after eating. The stool may contain mucous. Upper abdominal discomfort after eating may accompany the pain.

It appears that exacerbations are triggered by stress, emotions, fatigue, depression, and anxiety. Disorders that may be seen in patients with irri-

table bowel are: migraines, abnormal eating behavior, sleep disturbances, chronic stress, fibromyalgia, personality and anxiety disorders, and physical/sexual abuse. The mainstay of treatment is to use various techniques to relax and to reduce stressful and emotional conflicts.

Dietary changes\* and various medications such as fiber supplementation, anti-diarrheals, and antispasmodics can be used to relieve and

control constipation, diarrhea and abdominal cramps:

Fiber supplementation: vegetables, fruits, bran, Metamucil<sup>TM</sup>

Anti-diarrheals: Imodium<sup>TM</sup>

Antispasmodics: Bentyl<sup>TM</sup>, Levsin<sup>TM</sup>

A detailed history and careful physical examination by a health care provider is warranted to rule out other gastrointestinal disorders such as lactose intolerance, infection, inflammatory bowel disease (ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease) or cancer. A person needs a medical evaluation if the abdominal pain is associated with fever, vomiting, bright red or maroon-colored stools or weight loss. Diarrhea lasting more than three days is another indication for a medical evaluation.

\* Dietary changes will vary with individuals. It includes avoiding large or fatty meals, caffeine, milk products, and sugar free sweets.

