

# Is there an effective rehabilitation program to help children who are slow to recover from sports-related concussions?

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## Summary

This article presents a new approach to treating children who are slow to recover after a sports-related concussion. The program, called the *montreal children's hospital rehabilitation after concussion* program (mch-rac), is based on 3 principles: 1) post-concussion symptoms are non-specific; 2) impacts of injury on athletes are multi-dimensional, and 3) exercise as an intervention can be beneficial. Children who were considered to be slow to recover from concussion trauma (and who were subsequently recruited) had symptoms from the injury for at least 4 weeks without improvement. This program consists of 4 components: a) aerobic exercises carried out at 50-60% of maximum capacity for up to 15 minutes, or until there is an increase in the concussion symptoms; b) coordination exercises corresponding to the child's favourite sport, for up to 10 minutes; c) 5 minutes of sports-related visualization and d) a home program to continue training outside of the clinic, for 15 minutes a day. Children are monitored throughout this program to make sure that their symptoms do not increase, and this program is carried out until children spend one week with no concussion symptoms. This program was tried out with 16 child- and adolescent- participants, all of whom showed an improvement in their recovery, and were all able to go back to their daily activities symptom-free. This gradual, closely supervised active rehabilitation program, when administered 1 month-post-injury, appears to be a great way of treating children who are slow to recover from concussion. Steps are being taken to administer this program as part of a clinical trial.

## What families should know

A gradual, closely-supervised active rehabilitation program provides not only means to a faster recovery, but also, qualitatively speaking, increases the self-efficacy and confidence of the child, as well as the empowerment of the parents

## What practitioners should know

The MCH-RAC program is an effective method to treat children who are slow to recover from a sport-related concussion.

## Reference

Gagnon, i., galli, c., friedman, d., grilli, l., & iverson, g.l. (2009). Active rehabilitation for children who are slow to recover following sport- related concussion. *Brain injury*, 23(12): 956-964.

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