

Harm from baseball concussions may linger, study finds

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Batting skills often worse than normal after players return to sport.

(HealthDay)—Even after they're cleared to play following a concussion, baseball players' batting skills are worse than normal, which suggests they may not be fully recovered, a new study suggests.

"Although players who sustain a [concussion](#) may be symptom-free and cleared by MLB [Major League Baseball] protocol to return to play, the residual effects of concussion on the complex motor skills required for batting may still be a problem," said principal investigator Dr. Jeffrey Bazarian, an associate professor of emergency medicine at the University of Rochester in New York.

Researchers looked at 59 MLB players who suffered a concussion between 2007 and 2013. During their first two weeks back in action, the

players' batting performances were much poorer than those of 63 [players](#) who had been away from the game due to the birth of a child or death of a family member.

The batting averages of the two groups were .234 vs. .264. Their slugging percentages were .359 vs. .420 and their on-base plus slugging percentages were .654 vs. .747, according to the study presented at the recent annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in New Orleans.

A batter's brain and neural networks have to be in top condition to achieve the hand-eye coordination, reaction time, body stability and balance, and swing control needed to hit a ball that takes about 400 milliseconds to travel from pitcher to batter, Bazarian said in a university news release.

After a concussion, brain function can be impaired for weeks or months. Learning more about how concussions affect batting performance can assist in determining when a concussed player is ready to return to the lineup, the study said.

After strains and bruises, concussions are the most common injuries in professional baseball, accounting for about 2 percent of all injuries that result in loss of playing time. Concussions among high school and college [baseball players](#) are rising by about 14 percent a year, the researchers said.

Data and conclusions presented at meetings are usually considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [sports concussions](#).

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