

Caring for Your Concussion

About Concussion

A concussion is a **brain injury**. Even though you can't see it, it can affect the way you think, feel, and even sleep. Like any medical diagnosis, a concussion requires direct involvement from a doctor, nurse practitioner, or licensed healthcare professional with relevant training to guide a safe return to school, work, play, and life.

Each concussion is unique. Each person may experience different symptoms, triggers, and timeline for recovery, so your concussion requires an individualized approach based on your specific symptoms.

Did you know that it can take up to 7 days for symptoms of a concussion to appear?

When to Seek Medical Care

- Worsening symptoms may be a sign of a more serious injury. Go to the Emergency Department if headaches become more severe, pupils are unequal in size, or if you experience any of the following:
 - ▶ Getting more and more confused
 - ▶ Weakness/tingling in arms or legs
 - ▶ Worsening headache
 - ▶ Trouble walking
 - ▶ Vomiting more than once
 - ▶ Slurred speech
 - ▶ Seizures
 - ▶ Strange behaviour
- After being diagnosed with a concussion, you should have a follow-up appointment with a healthcare professional within two weeks to be re-assessed.

My follow-up appointment is scheduled for _____
(date)

Recovering from Concussion

- Relative rest for a maximum of 24-48 hours after a concussion is recommended. Prolonged rest has not been found to improve concussion recovery, and may even delay recovery.
 - ▶ Relative rest: activities of daily living including walking and other light physical and cognitive activities are permitted as tolerated.
- After this initial period of relative rest, getting back to a normal daily routine with regular sleeping habits is recommended.
- The goal of concussion management is to support the patient's complete recovery from concussion by promoting a safe and gradual return to activity following a step-wise approach.
- However, progression through the strategies may be slowed when there is more than a mild and brief symptom exacerbation.*
- Screen time should be limited within the first 24-48 hours following a concussion.

Returning to School

- Students should begin a gradual increase in their cognitive load with the goal of minimizing time away from the school environment. The return to school should not be restricted if the student is tolerating full days. Missing more than one week of school is not generally recommended.
- Find out if your school has a Return to Learn Program to support students returning to school after concussion. If you need more support and accommodations for school, your medical or healthcare professional may refer you to a multi-disciplinary concussion clinic with experience in individualized learning plans following a concussion.

Returning to Sport

- Children and youth should NOT return to activities with an inadvertent risk of head impact until they have fully returned to school and received medical clearance, but early introduction of reduced physical activity is appropriate.
- A gradual, step-wise return to cognitive and physical activity is best following concussion. This process is individualized, guided by your symptoms, and supervised by your healthcare professional.
- Written determination of medical clearance should be provided before unrestricted Return to Sport as directed by local laws and/or sporting regulations.

Persisting Symptoms

- Typically, concussion symptoms can last up to 4 weeks.
- If symptoms persist beyond this, a medical or healthcare professional with experience in concussion management together with a multidisciplinary concussion clinic is recommended.
- When seeking care, ensure the clinic you choose offers:
 - ▶ direct access to and continued involvement of a medical or healthcare professional with experience in concussion management,
 - ▶ a network or multidisciplinary team of different regulated healthcare providers, and
 - ▶ a clinic that can provide a full spectrum of concussion care from early management to that of a prolonged course for individuals with persisting symptoms when needed.

More Information on Concussion

- ▶ www.parachute.ca/en/injury-topic/concussion/
- ▶ www.cattonline.com

*Mild exacerbation (worsening) of symptoms: No more than a 2-point increase when compared with the pre-activity value on a 0-10-point symptom severity scale.** "Brief" exacerbation of symptoms: Worsening of symptoms for up to 1 hour.

**0-10 point symptom severity scale: Please see the [Visual Analog Scale](#) for an example of a 0-10 symptom severity scale