

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, it will require direct physician involvement 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 Go Back to the Doctor

- 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 medical doctor within two weeks to be re-assessed.

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

Recovering from Concussion

- Rest in the first 24-48 hours following a concussion may be beneficial, but *prolonged* rest has not been found to improve concussion recovery, and may even delay recovery. After an initial period of rest, getting back to a normal daily routine with regular sleeping habits is important to help your brain and body recover.
- Reducing time spent on devices or doing certain activities may be recommended, to keep symptom levels low. This is because concussion symptoms can be made worse when your brain is overstimulated by:
 - physical activity
 - cognitive (thinking) activities
 - certain environments (bright lights, loud noise, crowds)

While some patients find screens (TV, computer, cellphone) or reading increases their symptoms, others may tolerate these activities.

Returning to School

- Students may need to stay home from school in the first days following a concussion, but a long absence from school is not recommended. Students should have regular medical follow-up after a concussion to monitor recovery and help with return to school.
- 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 physician may refer you to a physician-led multi-disciplinary concussion clinic with experience in individualized learning plans following a concussion.

Returning to Sport

- Children and youth should NOT return to sports/competition until they have successfully returned to school, 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 physician.
- Written clearance documentation will be required from a physician (medical doctor) before you return to a sport or activity that carries a risk of contact or possible head injury.

Persistent Symptoms

- Typically, concussion symptoms can last up to 4 weeks in youth (under 18) and 2 weeks in adults.
- If symptoms persist beyond this, a physician with experience in concussion management together with an interdisciplinary concussion clinic is recommended.
- When seeking care, ensure the clinic you choose offers:
 - direct access to and continued involvement of a medical doctor with experience in concussion management,
 - a network or interdisciplinary team of three or more different regulated health care 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 persistent symptoms when needed.

More Information on Concussion

- www.parachutecanada.org/concussion
- www.cattonline.com