



# Concussion

## What is concussion?

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that results in a **temporary disturbance of brain function**.

Most concussions typically cause short-lived, self-limiting symptoms.

Your child should see their health practitioner in 7 to 10 days for follow-up.

## What are the symptoms of a concussion?

- headaches
- feeling sick or vomiting
- feeling tired
- sleep changes (e.g. difficulty falling asleep, needing more sleep)
- dizziness, balance or co-ordination problems
- sensitivity to light or noise
- blurred or double vision
- difficulty thinking clearly
- memory problems
- difficulty concentrating
- behaviour changes (e.g. more irritable or impulsive)
- feeling more emotional (e.g. feeling sad or anxious)

## Recovery from a concussion

### The first 24 – 48 hours post injury

Just like an injured muscle, an injured brain needs the chance to recover, and then rebuild its strength.

Doing light everyday tasks (e.g. self-cares, reading, colouring, arts and crafts) and low impact exercises

(e.g. short walks) can help with recovery. These types of activities can be done for short periods of time (e.g. 10 – 15 minutes) before taking a break.



### Screen Time

It is important to limit using screens as much as possible during this time. Screens (e.g. TVs, computers, smart devices) are hard work for an injured brain as there is a lot of visual and sound information to deal with quickly. Video games and social media scrolling should be avoided for the first 24 – 48 hours.



### Sleep

Your child may need to sleep more. This is a time when the brain can repair and restore itself. To avoid disrupting normal night-time sleep patterns, daytime naps are best to occur in the late morning or early afternoon and should be limited to 30 minutes or less.



### School

Your child is likely to need a minimum of two days off school.



### Pain Relief

Your child can have paracetamol (e.g. Pamol<sup>®</sup>) for headaches. Anti-inflammatory medications (e.g. ibuprofen, Brufen<sup>®</sup>) may be used 48 hours after injury for muscle pain or headaches. Taking pain relief continuously for more than 15 days can make symptoms worse.

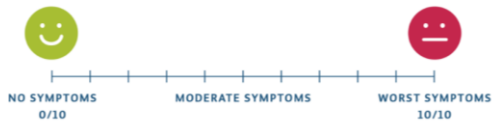
## After 24 – 48 hours post injury

Monitor how different activities affect your child.

Research has shown that people who do too much too soon AND those who do too little are slower to recover from a concussion

To find out how different activities affect your child keep a note of much they are experiencing symptoms on a scale between 0 and 10.

They can start doing mental and physical activities for short periods of time (e.g. 10 – 15 minutes). Then gradually increase the time and intensity. Use their symptoms scores as a guide.



If an activity causes an increase in their symptoms of **three points or more on the above scale they have done too much**. They should stop the activity for now, and when they try again, go back a step (e.g. finish 10 minutes sooner).

When the **increase is less than three points they can start to gradually increase** the amount of time they spend doing that activity.

Rest and reducing activities help the brain to recover. They shouldn't try to do too much too fast and they should take regular breaks.

### Continued recovery

Because the brain needs to put some of its energy into recovering from injury, it has less energy available for other things.



#### Everyday activities

Break activities up into short blocks and mix up activities that drain the brain with activities that help it recharge.

Take a break before symptoms get noticeable. Take a break as soon as symptoms are +2 points from when you started the activity.



#### Gentle exercise (refer to specific advice sheet)

Do easy, low intensity physical activities at least once per day.

Start to increase from 10 – 15 minutes up to 25 – 30 minutes and increase intensity (such as increasing inclination or speed) guided by symptoms.



#### Limit screen use

Gradually increase screen use time and type. It can be easier for the brain to process information on screens by increasing the font size and reducing the brightness.



#### Avoid further injury

Your child should avoid activities that put them at risk of a crash, collision or contact. The effects of another brain injury can be worse if they haven't fully recovered. If they sustain another injury, it is important to seek medical advice quickly.



#### Return to school (refer to specific advice sheet)

Your child should return to school gradually by starting with quarter or half days. It is important that they have returned to school fully before they return to sport (and more vigorous activity)



#### Sleep

Your child may still need to sleep more. To avoid disrupting normal night-time sleep patterns, daytime naps are best to occur in the late morning or early afternoon and should be limited to 30 minutes or less.

**Physical activity ideas**

**LOW INTENSITY**

- Walking
- Jogging
- Easy cycling on stationary bike
- Easy swimming
- Aqua jogging

**HIGH INTENSITY**

- RPM/Spin class
- Heavy weight lifting
- Sprinting
- Swimming intervals
- HIIT classes

**Brain activity ideas**

**RECHARGING ACTIVITIES**

- Napping
- Sleep
- Meditation
- Breathing techniques
- Baking
- Listening to calm music/podcasts

**DRAINING ACTIVITIES**

- Video games
- Social media scrolling
- Computer use
- Reading – books/magazines
- Puzzles
- Working/studying

### See a doctor today if your child has any of the following symptoms

- unusual sleepiness
- continued vomiting
- severe headache despite pain relief
- seems confused or behaves strangely
- is very grumpy or irritable
- blurred vision
- slurred speech
- any change in the way your child walks or uses their arms or legs

## CONTACTS

Health line: 0800 611 116 (available 24 hours)

