

Concussion / Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Recovery Advice



AUT TRAUMATIC BRAIN
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manage
my health

My health in my hands

You have been diagnosed with a concussion, which is a mild traumatic brain injury. Most of the time this is a short-lived injury.

Please follow this advice to help speed up your recovery. You are encouraged to share this information with family and friends to support your recovery.

You should book in to see your GP or other medical professional in 7-10 days for a check up.

What is concussion or mild traumatic brain injury?

Concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury. A brain injury occurs when there is a blow to the head or impact causing the brain to be shaken within the skull. This affects the way your brain functions.

The brain is a very complex organ; following injury there are a variety of symptoms that you may experience, and this varies from person to person.

Warning signs: If you experience any of these signs or if your symptoms get worse please go to your nearest hospital immediately.

- Fainting (passing out)
- Seizure (fit or convulsion)
- Feeling extremely tired
- Loss of balance or clumsiness
- A headache that gets worse or is severe
- Repeated vomiting (being sick)
- Feeling confused or agitated
- Differences in your vision (trouble seeing)
- Slurred speech
- Feeling weak or numb



How can I help my brain to recover?

The first 24-48 hours—setting yourself up for the best recovery

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

If you normally use glasses or a hearing aid, it is important that you use them to make it easier for your brain to process visual/audio information.

Aim to do some low impact exercise or activity such as walking (avoid hills) or using an exercise bike (at a slow pace) 1-2 times a day for 10-15 minutes.

Doing light everyday tasks e.g., self-care, household tasks, cleaning up and simple food preparation, can help with your recovery. Do these sorts of activities for short periods of time (e.g., 10-15 minutes) and then have a break.

Avoid using screens as much as possible (e.g., TV, mobile or computer). This is hard work for your brain. Limit screen time to simple tasks e.g. sending a few texts or a single email.

- Avoid video games, social media scrolling and using video conferencing (e.g. Zoom/Skype) for the first 24-48 hours while your brain is recovering.
- Short phone calls are ok and can help you feel connected to others.



Sleep

You may find you need to sleep more. This is a time when the brain can repair and restore itself.

If you need to take a daytime nap, take one either late morning or early afternoon (for 20-30 minutes) to avoid disrupting your night-time sleep patterns.



Work and study

You are likely to need a minimum of 2 days off work or school. Beyond that your healthcare provider will provide appropriate guidance.



Air travel

You should not take a flight for the next 24-48hrs.



Driving

You should not drive for at least 48 hours after a concussion.

Do not return to driving until any symptoms of dizziness have gone away, your concentration is good and sustained, you can react quickly to unexpected hazards and your ability to judge distances is normal.



Pain relief

Use **Paracetamol** or **Panadol** for headaches.

Do not use aspirin or an anti-inflammatory pain reliever such as Ibuprofen, Naproxen, Voltaren (Diclofenac) or Nurofen (NSAIDs).



Alcohol and recreational drugs

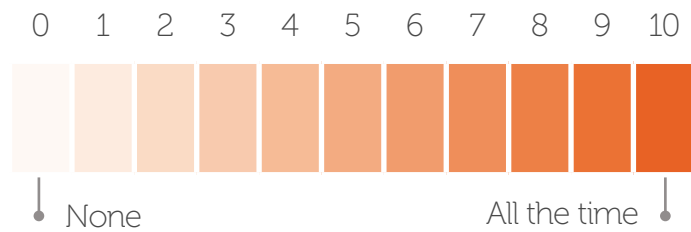
Avoid alcohol, caffeine/energy drinks and other recreational drugs until your symptoms are better. The brain cannot deal with these substances as well when it is injured, and they can make you feel worse and delay your recovery.

After 24-48 hours—rebuilding your brain’s energy and strength

Start to monitor how different activities affect you

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

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

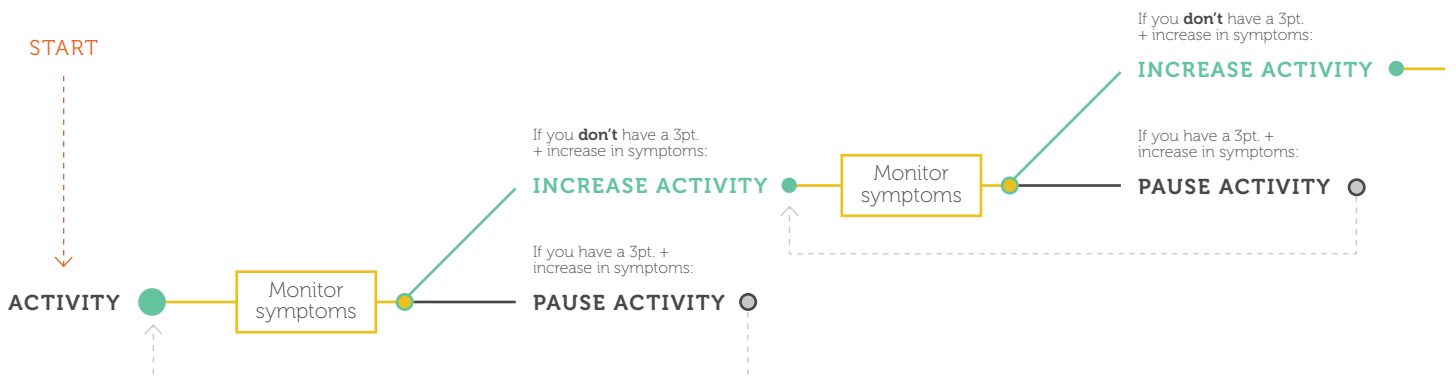


Start doing mental and physical activities for short periods (e.g., 10-15 minutes). Then gradually increase the time and intensity. Use your symptom scores as a guide.

If an activity causes more than a 3-point increase in your symptoms, you have done too much. Stop the activity for now and when you try again, go back a step (e.g., finish 10 minutes sooner).

When there is less than a 3-point increase in your symptoms then you can start to gradually increase the amount of time you spend doing that activity.

How to progress through activities



Using your brain's energy levels wisely

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

Knowing how different activities affect you and your symptoms, will mean you can then find out which daily activities drain your brain's energy tank and which ones fill it back up.

Everyday activities

Break your activities up into short blocks.

Mix up activities that drain your brain with activities that help it recharge.

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

Gentle exercise

Do some easy, low-intensity physical activity (see examples from the list) at least once per day.

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

Limit screen use

Gradually increase screen use time and type (e.g., 5 minutes, 10 minutes). You can make it easier for your brain to process information on screens by increasing the font size and using f.lux software that reduces the brightness. Use one screen and do a single task at a time.

Avoid further injury

Avoid activities that put you at risk of a crash, collision, or contact.

A second injury to the head before the brain has recovered means the brain is less able to cope with another injury. The effects of another injury can therefore be much worse.

If you have another injury soon afterwards, it is important to seek medical advice quickly.

Return to work/school

When you are ready to go back to work or study, do so gradually. Start with a few hours or half days.

It is important to achieve a full return to school or work prior to returning to sport (and more vigorous activity).

Sleep

Make sure you get a good nights' sleep. If you feel you still need to take a nap during the day still try to reduce the time of these naps gradually until you no longer need them.





Brain Activity Mix List

Recharging activities

- Taking a short nap
- Short low intensity walks
- Meditation
- Breathing techniques
- Baking
- Listening to calm music/podcasts



Draining activities

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

*Note: These are examples and everyone will respond differently. Find what works for you. The suggested draining activities are known to be hard on the injured brain, these should not be used for recharging.



Things you might experience

Physical symptoms

Headaches, feeling restless, sensitivity to bright light, noise and movement, feeling unsteady, dizzy, clumsy having problems with your vision, feeling like you might be sick (nauseous)

Cognitive (thinking) symptoms

Difficulty concentrating, feeling confused or disorientated, finding it hard to remember things (you might not easily recall events that have occurred or things you have been told during the day).

Sleep symptoms

Changes in sleep patterns (difficulty falling asleep, waking up during the night or waking earlier than usual), feeling extremely tired during the day.

Emotional symptoms

Mood swings; outbursts of anger (verbal or physical); increased frustration; feeling more withdrawn, feeling tearful, worrying about things.

What happens after a concussion or brain injury?

In some cases, you may feel better after a few hours/days; in other cases, you may feel fine initially and then develop symptoms a few hours later or the next day.

If your symptoms are not steadily improving after 7-10 days, make sure you discuss this with your

GP or other medical professional. There are some additional services that can help if you need them.



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