

Concussion / Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Recovery Advice

Caregiver's
Guide



AUT TRAUMATIC BRAIN
INJURY NETWORK



**manage
my health**

My health in my hands

This recovery advice sheet has been designed to help people provide support to those who have been diagnosed with a concussion.

Concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury. Most of the time this injury is short-lived. You can help speed up your child/friend/partners/employees recovery by supporting them to follow this advice.

Encourage the person to book in to see their 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 their brain functions.

The brain is a very complex organ; following injury there are a variety of symptoms that they 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



What will help an injured brain to recover?

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

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

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

Encourage them 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 recovery. These types activities can be done for short periods of time (e.g. 10-15 minutes) before taking a break.

It is important that they avoid using screens as much as possible (e.g. TV, mobile or computer). These activities are hard work for an injured brain.

- Limit screen time to simple tasks e.g. sending a few texts or a single email.
- They should avoid video games, social media scrolling and using video conferencing (e.g. Zoom/Skype) for the first 24-48 hours while their brain is recovering.
- Short phone calls are ok and can help them feel connected to others.



Sleep

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

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



Work and study

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



Air travel

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



Driving

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

They should not return to driving until any symptoms of dizziness have gone away, concentration is good and sustained, they can react quickly to unexpected hazards and their 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

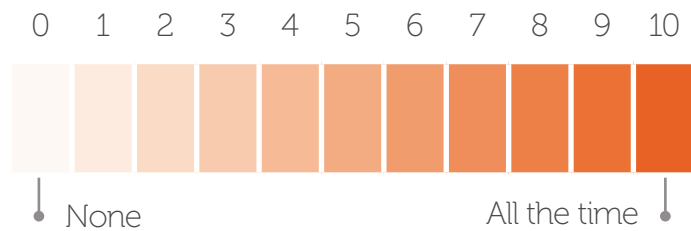
They should avoid alcohol, caffeine/energy drinks and other recreational drugs until their symptoms are better. The brain cannot deal with these substances as well when it is injured and they can cause worsening of symptoms and delay recovery.

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

Start to Monitor how different activities affect your child/friend/partner/employee

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 them, support them to keep a note of how much they are experiencing symptoms on a scale between 0 and 10.

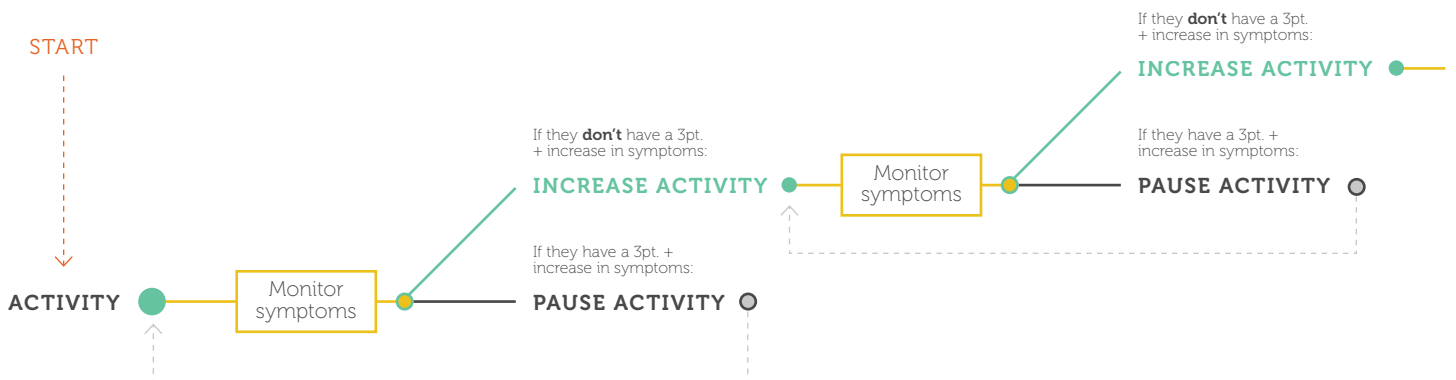


Encourage them to start doing mental and physical activities for short periods (e.g. 10-15 minutes). Then gradually increase the time and intensity. Use their symptom scores as a guide.

If an activity causes more than a 3-point increase in their symptoms, 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 there is less than a 3-point increase in their symptoms they can start to gradually increase the amount of time they spend doing that activity.

How to progress them through activities



Using their 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 their symptoms, will mean they can then find out which daily activities drain their brain's energy tank and which ones fill it back up.

Everyday activities

Break activities up into short blocks

Mix up activities that drain the brain with activities that help it recharge

Take a break before symptoms get more noticeable.

Take a break as soon as symptoms are +2 points from when they started the activity

Gentle exercise

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

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

Limit screen use

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

Avoid further injury

They should avoid activities that put them 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 they have another injury, it is important that they seek medical advice quickly.

Return to work/school

When they are ready to go back to work or study, they should do so gradually. Starting with quarter 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 they get a good nights' sleep. If they still feel that they need to take a nap during the day still try to reduce the time of these naps gradually until they 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.



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What to look for

Physical symptoms

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

Cognitive (thinking) symptoms

Difficulty concentrating, feeling confused or disorientated, finding it hard to remember things (they 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, they may feel better after a few hours/days; in other cases, they may feel fine initially and then develop symptoms a few hours later or the next day.

If their symptoms are not steadily improving after 7-10 days, it's recommended they discuss this with their GP or other medical professional. There are some additional services that can help if you need them.

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