



Child Concussion Information for Family/ Friends: How to Support Recovery

This information sheet contains important information about concussions according to current best practice guidelines.

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury. Any child/teen who gets hit in the head, face, neck, or body has a chance of getting a concussion. Concussions cannot be seen on brain scans or x-rays.

What should a child/teen do if they think they or a friend has a concussion?

A child/teen should stop whatever activity they are doing right away. The child/teen will need to get help from a doctor or nurse practitioner right away. Most children will recover from a concussion in 1-4 weeks, managing symptoms at home.

When can a child/teen return to school after a concussion?

A child/teen should rest for 1-2 days after a concussion. Return to school and learning should be gradual (step-by-step). Begin with 30 minutes of cognitive activity at a time and increase by 30 minutes with each step. Return to school is expected prior to return to sport.

Step 1: Rest at home (24-28 hours max).

No schoolwork. Limit screen time. Basic board games, crafts, talking on the phone permitted.

Step 2: Light activities at home.

Reading, drawing, texting. Start with 5-15 minutes at a time and gradually increase.

Step 3: Light school activities at home.

Introduce school work outside of the classroom. Homework, reading, or other activities. Work up to 60 minutes of school work in two 30 minute intervals.

Step 4: Return to school part-time.

School for a few hours or half days. Gradually increase school activities with accommodations as needed.

Step 4: Return to school full time.

Gradual return. No medical clearance necessary. Full days at school. All homework.

Helpful Resources:

Concussion Guide for Parents and Caregivers. <https://parachute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Concussion-Guide-for-Parents-and-Caregivers.pdf>

Post Concussion Information Sheet. <https://braininjuryguidelines.org/pediatricconcussion/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Parachute-Post-Concussion-Information-Sheet-General-English.pdf>

Understanding and Managing Concussion in Youth. https://www.thechildren.com/sites/default/files/PDFs/Trauma/ConcussionKitInfo/16023-e_concussion_kit-brochure_web_spread.pdf

Living Guideline for Diagnosing and Managing Pediatric Concussion. <https://pedsconcussion.com/>

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What should a child/teen do to help recover from a concussion?

Children/teens need to give their brain time to heal. Here are some tips:

- Take breaks from activities if symptoms get worse
- Get plenty of sleep and rest
- Spend time with family and friends
- Avoid activities that may involve falling or contact
- Limit screen time

Return to Learn and Return to Play Support

Family and friends can provide support throughout a child's recovery. The return to play and learn is a gradual process for every child and family and friends should be aware of this process to give them the best support.

When can a child/teen return to sports after a concussion?

A child/teen should rest for 1-2 days after a concussion. Return to sport and physical activity should be gradual (step-by-step). If no new or worsening symptoms are present for 24 hours move to the next step. If new or worsening symptoms do occur, move back a step.

Step 1: Rest at home (24-28 hours max).

Rest completely. Walking permitted.

Step 2: Light physical activity.

Walking, jogging, swimming, slow stationary cycling permitted. No resistance training. Goal is to lightly increase heart rate.

Step 3: Sport-specific exercise. Non-contact.

Skating, running, simple sport drills. No drills with risk of head injury.

Step 4: More complex activities. Non-contact.

Sport practices without body contact. Gym class activities without risk of head injury permitted.

Step 5: Full-contact activity.

Full activities and sport practices after doing full-time school and getting medical clearance from a doctor.

Step 6: Full return to all activities and sports.

Return to normal full-contact game play.

References :

Reed, N., Zemek, R., Dawson, J., Ledoux, AA., et al. (2021). Living Guideline for Diagnosing and Managing Pediatric Concussion. Toronto, ON: Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation. <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/3VWN9>

TREKK. (2022). Bottom Line Recommendations Concussion, version 3.1. Winnipeg, MB: TREKK. https://trekk.ca/system/assets/assets/attachments/570/original/2022-02-11_Concussion_BLR-converted.pdf?1644953349

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