



Concussion - returning to school & sport

Emergency Department factsheets

What is a concussion?

A concussion occurs after a strong blow to the head or significant shaking and the brain has been injured. Concussion is a brain injury.

What to expect

Many people cannot remember events before or after their head injury (amnesia).

It can take some time for the brain to recover. During this time headaches and mild cognitive problems (such as difficulty concentrating, remembering things, performing complex tasks, and mood changes) are common. It is also normal to feel more tired than usual.

Average recovery time in children/adolescents is 4 weeks. There is no specific treatment other than plenty of rest.

Some people will have ongoing problems. If this is the case, see your local doctor or health care provider.

Return to school

- In most cases, after no more than a few days of rest, your child should gradually increase their daily activity level as long as their symptoms do not worsen.
- If symptoms persist for more than a week or they worsen, see your general practitioner.
- If it is exam period, consider postponing any exams until the student has sufficiently recovered. Please seek further advice from your doctor if it is exam period.
- Thanks are given to **The International Concussion in Sport Consensus Group** for providing the table below. If symptoms recur, your child will need to return to the previous step.

Steps	Activity at each step	Goal of each step
1. Symptom-limited activity	Typical activities that you do during day that does not provoke symptoms (e.g. reading, texting, screen time). Start with 5 -15 minutes at a time and gradually build up.	Gradual return to typical activities.
2. School activities	Homework, reading or other cognitive activities outside of the classroom.	Increase tolerance to cognitive work.
3. Return to school part-time	Gradual introduction of school-work. May need to start with a partial day or with increased breaks during day.	Increased activities.
4. Return to school full-time	Gradually progress school activities until a full day can be tolerated.	Return to full activities and then catch up on missed work.

Return to sport

- Your child should not return to sport until they are back to full school performance without

symptoms before being considering graduated return to return to training/game play/ or sport. They should not skip any steps of this process.

- Many sporting codes have similar guidelines on returning to sport. A basic one is listed below. **Your code will likely have a specific guideline on their websites, and your general practitioner will need to fill in paperwork.**

- Do not return to sport until all symptoms have gone. This is because reaction times and thinking will often be slower, putting your child at risk of further injury. Another head injury before fully recovering from the first, can result in catastrophic brain swelling and death.

Exercise step	Functional exercise at each step	Goal of each step
1. Symptom limited activity	Daily activities that do not provoke symptoms.	Gradual re-introduction of work/school activities.
2. Light aerobic exercise	Walking or stationary cycling at slow to medium pace. No resistance training.	Increase heart rate.
3. Sport-specific exercise	Running or skating drills. No head impact activities.	Add movement.
4. Non-contact training drills	Harder training drills, e.g. passing drills, may start progressive resistance training.	Exercise, coordination and increased thinking.
General practitioner typically provides medical clearance for further progression in most codes		
5. Full contact practice	Following medical clearance, participate in normal training activities.	Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff.
6. Return to play/sport	Normal game play.	

Return immediately

If the patient develops any of the following:

- unconsciousness or undue drowsiness
- frequent vomiting
- severe headache or dizziness that continues
- convulsion or fit or spasms of the face or limbs
- unusual or confused behaviour
- difficult to wake up
- weakness of the arms or legs
- abnormal or unsteady walking
- slurred speech
- blurred or double vision
- bleeding or discharge from ear or nose
- if you have any other concerns.

Seeking help

In a medical emergency, go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).

For other medical problems see your local doctor or health-care professional.

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) provides health information, referral and teletriage services to the public in all parts of Queensland and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the cost of a local call*.

*Calls from mobile phones may be charged at a higher rate. Please check with your telephone service provider

Disclaimer: This health information is for general education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.