

Diagnosis of Prolonged Symptoms

What are Prolonged Symptoms?

Most patients recover from a concussion within the first few weeks after the injury, but 15-20% of patients will still have symptoms beyond one month. These are called 'prolonged symptoms' and they can be any concussion symptom.

*Note: Sometimes the word “**persistent**” is used instead of “**prolonged**”. In other resources you may see both words being used.*

Prolonged symptoms can affect a person's daily life, relationships with others, and being able to get back to usual activities. The approach taken to manage these symptoms will be different for each patient.

Make sure to tell your health care practitioner if your concussion symptoms are lasting longer than a month.

How can prolonged symptoms affect me?

There are a number of factors that can influence a patient's rate of recovery and whether they will have prolonged symptoms. Here are some examples:

- Having a history of concussion or other brain injuries
- Having a high number of symptoms early in recovery
- Delayed return to work
- Life stressors
- Older age
- Lack of social support
- Female gender

Patient tips

Below are some tips from our patients for what they found helpful.

What Makes Your Symptoms Worse?

It is important to figure out what makes your symptoms worse. Try to limit or avoid these activities.

Keep a symptom journal

It is a good idea to keep track of your symptoms in a journal or log for future medical appointments. This way you can make sure you are not forgetting anything when you speak with your healthcare provider.



Assessing prolonged symptoms

To assess whether you are experiencing prolonged symptoms, your primary care provider may do the following:

- Re-assess your symptoms and do more physical exams
- Ask about mental or social factors that might be affecting your health
- Ask about activities that may affect how you recover
- Review your prescribed and over the counter medications/ supplements,
- Review your use of alcohol, marijuana, and/or other drugs
- Try to figure out if your symptoms are from the concussion or from something else
- May refer you to other healthcare providers to manage specific symptoms that require special assessment and/or treatment

Your primary healthcare provider should encourage you to make a gradual increase in your activity levels to help your recovery process.

Patients who have prolonged symptoms can still have improvements over time and learn to manage their symptoms.

Additional Resources

Below is a list of resources you may find helpful to learn more about diagnosis of prolonged symptoms, as well as tools that may help you with your recovery process.

Concussion Handbook (webpage)

<https://sunnybrook.ca/content/?page=bsp-brain-injury-education>

Tips for Choosing a Concussion Clinic (pdf)

https://concussionfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/US_Tips-for-Choosing-Concussion-Clinic_digital.pdf

Parkwood Pacing Graphs (pdf)

<https://concussionsontario.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/appendix-2-2.pdf>

Appointment Tracker (pdf)

<https://concussionsontario.org/sites/default/files/2025-01/appointment-tracker%20Jan%202025.pdf>