

# Initial Management of Concussion

## How will I feel after I have had a concussion?

Concussion symptoms can appear right away or even days after your injury. Symptoms can last for days, weeks, or even longer. Some people may have only one symptom and others may have many.

Concussions can affect how you think, feel, and behave.

## What can concussion recovery look like?

The first few days: It is important to rest and only do light activities during the first 24-48 hours after your injury. After this, you should start to gradually increase your activity levels as your symptoms allow. Remember to:

- Take care of basic needs by eating well, getting regular sleep, and managing stress.
- Avoid drinks such as coffee and alcohol. Do not use drugs (e.g., marijuana) that are not prescribed to you.
- Only take medications that your doctor has approved.
- Limit your use of electronic devices, and avoid any activity that could lead to another concussion or cause your symptoms to get worse.

*During this time, you should also begin your management plan (see below). You should track your symptoms and plan to follow-up with your primary health care provider.*

### Feeling

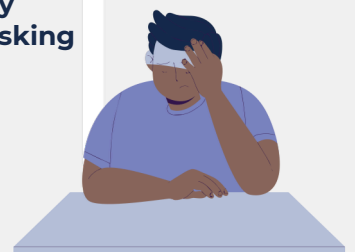
- Headache/migraine
- Dizziness and balance problems
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Feeling more tired
- Blurred vision
- Sensitive to light and/or noise
- Hearing problems
- Vision problems
- Ringing in the ears
- Temporary problems with smell and/or taste
- Numbness and tingling
- Neck pain

### Thinking

- Feeling 'foggy'
- Hard to remember things and hard to focus
- Understand information more slowly
- Trouble thinking clearly
- Trouble finding words
- Trouble making decisions, planning
- Easily distracted
- Difficulty multi-tasking

### Behaving

- Depression (feeling sad)
- More Anxious (worried or fearful)
- Agitation (can't stay still)
- Irritable (grumpy or cranky)
- More Impulsive
- Aggression
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Lack of patience



## What can concussion recovery look like?

The first week: Gradually go back to activities that do not cause symptoms to get worse. It is important to see your primary healthcare provider again if symptoms get worse. They will give you ways to help increase your activity levels and maximize your recovery.

Follow up: Your primary healthcare provider should see you 1 to 2 weeks after your injury to track your symptoms and make sure your recovery is going as planned. You may need to see other healthcare providers who specialize in treating concussion to help manage specific symptoms.

## How long does it take to recover?

Concussion treatment and recovery is different for every patient. Most people who experience a concussion make a full recovery within a few days or weeks. For some it may take longer. When symptoms last longer than 1 month, they are referred to as *prolonged symptoms*. Patients who have prolonged symptoms may need to see other specialists. Your healthcare provider will monitor your symptoms to determine which treatment will be best for you.

## Can I drive after a concussion?

After a concussion, symptoms such as blurred vision, dizziness, fatigue, cognitive problems, and headache can affect your driving. It is important that you do not start to drive again until these symptoms are low enough to allow you to drive safely. If you are unsure about when to return to driving, talk to your primary healthcare provider.

## How can I recognize my symptoms?

It is helpful to keep track of your symptoms by writing them down. Try to notice how you feel as you do different activities and avoid any activities that cause your symptoms to get worse. Note if certain things that used to be easy to do are more difficult now. Keeping a log or journal will help you check your symptoms and see any changes. A family member, friend or support person can help with this. Bring this journal to all medical appointments to help you remember your symptoms. Talk with your primary healthcare provider about any changes in your symptoms so they can rule out something that might be more serious.



## Patient tips

**Below are some tips from our patients for what they found helpful when they were first diagnosed with concussion.**

### Bring a support person

Bringing a support person like a family member or close friend with you to your medical appointments is a helpful way to make sure you talk about your symptoms and understand any instructions. After a concussion, it can be hard to remember large amounts of new information, and a support person can help you do this.

### 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.

## How to use a management plan

If you are diagnosed with a concussion, your primary healthcare provider should give you a management plan to help your recovery. This management plan is just for you and based on your symptoms and any test results. It is a good idea for you to share this with your support person so they can help you check your symptoms and recovery progress.

### The management plan should include information about the following:

- The recovery process and realistic expectations
- Possible symptoms and how to manage, monitor, and prevent them
- How to recognize complications
- What you can do to manage stress
- How to safely and carefully increase your activity level (within your threshold)
- How to get back to life activities (return-to-work/school, return-to play, daily living activities)

**Your healthcare provider should explain this information to you as well as provide you with written information that you can understand.**



## Additional resources

**Below is a list of resources you may find helpful to understand more about initial management of concussion, as well as tools that may help you with your recovery process.**

### Problem Solving

[https://concussion.vch.ca/problem-solving\\_](https://concussion.vch.ca/problem-solving_)

### Concussion (video)

<https://www.cedars-sinai.org/health-library/video-library/video-detail/c/concussion.html>

### Caring for Yourself After Concussion (video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXQmnvlnXeA&list=PLvD7HhN5mi-ML63F7N0F6ojIyilrUJmw&index=4>

### A Guide to Understanding Your Recovery

<https://patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca/file/concussion-a-guide-to-understanding-symptoms-and-r-216241.pdf>

### Parkwood Pacing Graphs

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