

Concussion Do's and Don'ts: the first few days



The individual with concussion SHOULD:

✓ **See a doctor or nurse practitioner for help**

✓ **The first 48 hours – physical AND mental rest!**

Sleep at night, rest during the day.

✓ **Take it slowly returning to daily activities and sport**

Talk with your doctor or nurse practitioner about when you can return to work or school.

Talk with your doctor or nurse practitioner about a return to play protocol.

Talk with your employer or teacher about returning bit by bit.

As you start to feel better, it's important to get back to doing your normal activities as you can tolerate them. Start by doing just a little, and if you feel okay, then you can try to do a bit more. Take lots of rests and give yourself extra time.

✓ **Conserve your energy**

After a concussion, your brain has less energy to spare than it normally does. It is important to save physical and mental energy so that your brain can fully recover.

If symptoms return or you get new ones as you become more active, this is a sign that you are pushing yourself too hard.

✓ **Take care of basic needs**

Eating well can improve your mood, sleep and mental focus. Try to eat regular meals and snacks.

Stay away from stimulants such as coffee, caffeine, pop and energy drinks. Stimulants can put added stress on your brain.

Keep a regular sleep schedule. Talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner or health care provider if you have trouble getting a good night's sleep.

✓ **Manage stress**

Stress, emotional upset and worry can make symptoms feel worse and get in the way of doing things that will help you get better. Try to do things that help you relax and feel calm.

Talk about your worries with someone you trust—like your doctor, nurse practitioner, health care provider, family member, or friend – this can help you feel better. Let others know how they can help you.



The individual with concussion should NOT (until or unless your doctor or nurse practitioner says it's okay):

✗ **Be woken up every hour**

Increased sleep need is normal and necessary in the acute stage.

✗ **Be put in a dark room; avoiding all activity**

In the past, patients were told to have absolute rest and it is now accepted that light and cautious activity can be part of the healing process. Respect your brain and your body and have a conversation with your doctor or nurse practitioner about what this can look like for you.

✗ **Exercise/play sports, heavy household chores, or any activities that could lead to another concussion or cause symptoms to worsen**

Some people who have had repeated concussions may have serious long-term problems, including chronic difficulty with concentration, memory, headache, and sometimes physical skills (e.g., balance and coordination).

✗ **Return to full study or work**

Sometimes the demands of work/school can trigger symptoms following a concussion. You may need to take some time off work/school to rest and recover; or reduce your responsibilities for a short period of time.

✗ **Use electronic devices (e.g., looking at computer, phone, tablet, and TV screens)**

✗ **Drive, ride a bike, or work with machinery or ladders**

Reaction time, vision, and thinking may be impaired by a concussion. Do not drive a car until your doctor or nurse practitioner advises you it is okay.

✗ **Use non-prescription drugs, including alcohol**

Using non-prescription drugs (including alcohol) may add to concussion symptoms and increase recovery time. Only take medications your doctor has approved.