

# Concussion care

## The first 48 hours after a concussion - REST

# R

### Remember a concussion is a brain injury.

A concussion is a brain injury caused by a hit to the head or other part of the body. When the head or body is hit, the force causes the brain to move back and forth inside the skull causing an injury. You may or may not lose consciousness and still have a concussion. Symptoms of a concussion can be physical, mental or

behavioural. Some symptoms happen right after the injury to the brain. Some can develop or get worse over time. These are known as persistent symptoms. 80 per cent of people with a concussion fully recover within a few weeks while 20 per cent have on-going symptoms.

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### Each person has a different experience after their concussion.

A concussion is an invisible injury that affects how the brain works. For 48 hours after a concussion you should rest and give your brain time to heal. You should also be assessed by a health professional such as your family doctor. They can provide you proper treatment and care.

#### *Driving*

A concussion can affect your reaction time, vision and ability to think. Do not drive a car until your family doctor says it's OK.

#### *Drugs and alcohol*

Using non-prescription drugs and alcohol may make your concussion symptoms worse and increase your recovery time.

#### *Family*

It's important to tell your family about your concussion. Explain what you need them to do to help you recover.

#### *Exercise/activity*

Limit exercise and activities where you have to use a lot of energy. Your brain regulates your heart. Your concussion may affect this regulation. Stop physical activity if you feel your heart racing, feel tired or have other concussion symptoms. Do not participate in activities or sports where you could have another hit to the head or body.

#### *Mental rest*

Your concussion can affect your memory, concentration and how you process information. You may find reading, watching TV, using a computer or tablet tires you out now. Stop these activities if you experience symptoms such as a headache.

#### *Work*

Take time off work or reduce your workload. The demands of work can trigger symptoms or make them worse.

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### Seek immediate medical attention if you experience any of the following symptoms after a concussion:

- Stiff neck
- fluid and/or blood leaking from nose or ears
- difficulty waking up
- difficulty remaining awake
- fever
- headache that gets worse, lasts a long time, or is not relieved by over-the-counter pain relievers
- vomiting three times or more
- problems walking and/or talking
- problems thinking
- seizures
- changes in behaviour or unusual behaviour
- double or blurred vision
- changes in speech (slurred, difficult to understand or does not make sense)

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### Try to gradually return to activity

People who have a concussion are often told to rest, but not how to return to activity and exercise. Returning to normal activities too quickly can make your concussion symptoms last longer. You can also setback your recovery and cause permanent damage to your brain.

Most people can gradually return to normal levels of activity within two weeks of their concussion. Talk to your doctor about what is best for you. Learn how to return to activity by following the Parkwood Institute Pacing Points Program®.