CONCUSSION FACTS

The biggest risk is going back to play before the brain heals and getting another concussion!

**Management Tips**
- Drink water regularly
- Get substantial rest (8-10 hours of sleep)
- Do not skip meals
- Wear sunglasses or noise cancelling headphones if sensitive to light or noise

**Higher risk of prolonged recovery with:**
- Multiple concussions
- History of learning or behaviour problems
- History of migraines
- Symptoms of amnesia, fogginess or dizziness

**Time in Each Stage/How long will it take for me to get through each stage?**

**AVERAGE TIME IN EACH STAGE IS BASED ON RESEARCH FROM McMaster’s Back to Play Study.**

**RETURN TO ACTIVITY**

| Stage 1 | 1-2 days |
| Stage 2 | 7-10 days |
| Stage 3 | 7 days |
| Stage 4 | 7 days |
| Stage 5 | 3 days |

Fully back to game play in 4-5 weeks

**RETURN TO SCHOOL**

| Stage 1 | 1-2 days |
| Stage 2 | 3-5 days |
| Stage 3 | 7-14 days |
| Stage 4 | 7 days |

Fully back to school in 2-4 weeks

**Note:** Different people recover at different rates depending on many factors, including severity of injury and previous health history. These timelines are meant to help set expectations and to be used as a guide. If you are worried about the pace of your recovery, contact a physician or brain injury specialist.
# RETURN TO ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

STAGES 1-3 of the Return to Activity (RTA) and Return to School (RTS) guidelines should progress together, however youth should return full-time to school activities before progressing to STAGE 4, and 5 of the RTA guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>Short Phase of Physical and Cognitive Rest with Symptom Guided Activity 24-48 hours</th>
<th>GOAL:</th>
<th>WHICH SYMPTOM GROUP ARE YOU IN? A B or C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Stage 1: Light Exercise (No Contact)</td>
<td>Complete home and leisure activities as tolerated, without an increase in the number or severity of symptoms. No physical activities of any intensity for longer than 5 minutes, as long as these activities do not increase symptoms.</td>
<td>SYMPTOM FREE WITHIN 48 HOURS AFTER INJURY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stage 2: Individual Sport-Specific Activity (No Contact)</td>
<td>Begin no later than 2 weeks post injury if symptoms are decreasing.</td>
<td>SYMPTOM FREE WITHIN 48 HOURS AFTER INJURY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Stage 3: Sport Specific Practice with Team (No Contact)</td>
<td>Able to complete activity requirements for Stages 1 and 2, with two additional 30-minute sessions of moderate physical activity daily without worsening symptoms for a total of ~ 2 hours per day.</td>
<td>SYMPTOM FREE WITHIN 48 HOURS AFTER INJURY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Stage 4: Sport Specific Practice with Team (Contact)</td>
<td>Able to complete activity requirements for Stages 1-3, with two additional 30-minute sessions of moderate/vigorous physical activity for no more than 3 hours per day. By the end of the stage, progress to full team practice with NO CONTACT. Increase skill level and difficulty as tolerated without worsening symptoms.</td>
<td>SYMPTOM FREE WITHIN 48 HOURS AFTER INJURY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Stage 5: Sport-Specific Practice with Team (Contact)</td>
<td>Able to complete activity requirements for Stages 1-4, participate in full practice and training activities as tolerated without worsening or causing symptoms.</td>
<td>SYMPTOM FREE WITHIN 48 HOURS AFTER INJURY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Stage 6: Return to Full Activity, Sport or Game Play (Contact)</td>
<td>Complete home and leisure activities as tolerated, without an increase in the number or severity of symptoms. No physical activities of any intensity for longer than 5 minutes, as long as these activities do not increase symptoms.</td>
<td>SYMPTOM FREE WITHIN 48 HOURS AFTER INJURY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IMPORTANT NOTES**

**ANXIETY**
- can be high after a brain injury. Many youth worry about school failure and need reassurance that accommodations will be temporary.
- *Note: Different people recover at different rates depending on many factors, including severity of injury and previous health history. These timelines are meant to help set expectations and to be used as a guide. If you are worried about the pace of your recovery, contact a physician or brain injury specialist.*

**DEPRESSION**
- is common during recovery from brain injury, especially when the child is unable to be active. Depression may make symptoms worse or prolong recovery.

**STOP**
- If symptoms increase or return at any STAGE, reduce activity by returning to the previous stage for 24 hours.

**CONCussion**
- A concussion also known as a mild traumatic brain injury, changes the way the brain functions. A concussion can be caused by a direct or indirect hit, blow, or force to the head or body.

**SYMPTOMS OF CONCussion**
- Headache
- Dizziness, nausea or vomiting
- Sleep disturbance or drowsiness
- Poor balance or coordination
- Visual problems
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Mentally foggy
- Difficulty concentrating/remembering
- Emotional changes (anxiety, irritability, sadness)

**RED FLAG SYMPTOMS**
- If any of the following symptoms develop, go to the emergency department to seek further medical treatment immediately.
  - Increased drowsiness or cannot be awakened
  - Headaches or neck pain worsen
  - Persistent vomiting
  - Unequal pupil size
  - Seizures
  - Confusion or short-term memory loss
  - Blurred/double vision, slurred speech, or loss of motor function
  - Change in behaviour (irritability, agitation, or aggression)

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