CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RETURN TO CONTACT SPORT AFTER MULTIPLE CONCUSSIONS

- **NO SAME DAY RETURN TO PLAY!**
- If positive neuroimaging findings → Take at least 3 months off from contact sport.
- If 2 concussions in 3 months → Take 6 months off from the time of most recent injury.
- If 3 or more concussions in 1 year → Take 1 year off from the time of the most recent injury.
- Discuss retirement from contact sports after 3 concussions, considering non-contact alternatives, especially if symptoms are prolonged and affecting performance.

BUT CONTINUE TO EXERCISE!

Return to activity guidelines for children and youth is a brain injury and must be taken seriously.
# 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>WHICH SYMPTOM GROUP ARE YOU IN? A B or C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STAGE 1</td>
<td>SYMPTOM FREE WITHIN 48 HOURS AFTER INJURY: Take at least 24 hours for each stage as you complete the rest of the guidelines.</td>
<td>A SYMPTOM FREE WITHIN 48 HOURS AFTER INJURY: Take at least 24 hours for each stage as you complete the rest of the guidelines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAGE 2</td>
<td>SYMPTOM FREE/SYMPTOMS DECREASE WITHIN 1-4 WEEKS AFTER INJURY: Take at least 2 days for each stage as you complete the rest of the guidelines.</td>
<td>B SYMPTOM FREE/SYMPTOMS DECREASE WITHIN 1-4 WEEKS AFTER INJURY: Take at least 2 days for each stage as you complete the rest of the guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE 3</td>
<td>SYMPTOMATIC FOR MORE THAN 4 WEEKS: Take at least 1 week for each stage as you complete the rest of the guidelines.</td>
<td>C SYMPTOMATIC FOR MORE THAN 4 WEEKS: Take at least 1 week for each stage as you complete the rest of the guidelines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*GOAL:* 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.

**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/remarking
- 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)

**IMPORTANT NOTES**

- Anxiety can be high after a brain injury. Many youth worry about school failure and need reassurance that accommodations will be temporary.
- 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.

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