



## Putting it All Together: Recommendations for Concussion Recovery

### **Expected Prognosis and Recovery:**

Most individuals experience a complete full recovery within days to weeks and resume a normal lifestyle without complications in the future. The first few days (acute phase) are typically the worst for a patient as the brain heals before symptoms gradually resolve over the course of the following week(s). Most athletes are able to return to sports within 2-3 weeks. In some instances, it can take several weeks or longer to experience a full recovery.

### Steps to take after being diagnosed with a concussion

**School/Work:** Notify the appropriate individuals to let them know you will need some short term accommodations and may have to miss some school/work/activities.

- Keep in contact with the school and provide updates about your child's status
- Let them know that some adjustments to workload may be needed in order to prevent worsening of symptoms as your child returns to the classroom
- Discuss strategies and options for modified attendance if necessary

Pay attention to "hotspots" or triggers that lead to worsening of your child's symptoms and adjust activities accordingly (bright lights, loud noise, over-stimulating environments)

Symptoms should gradually improve day by day; If your symptoms are not improving, see a health care professional who has experience in treating concussions and brain injuries.

Ask your health care professional if and when you can safely drive a car, ride a bike, or other activities that might be dangerous for you or others.

It may be necessary to avoid environments that cause sensory problems (e.g., cafeterias, sporting events, direct sunlight, loud movies)

### Getting Better- General Tips for Recovery

#### Medical Management

Talk to your doctor about medications and avoid medications if not recommended by your physician.

Do not drink alcohol or take medications/other substances that might interfere with recovery

Drink lots of water and fluids to promote hydration



It is important to maintain a healthy balanced diet
Do not compensate for being tired by taking stimulants (e.g., caffeine, energy drinks or holistic substances)
<b>Minimize Your Risk</b>
Avoid physical activities until cleared by a physician (e.g., sports, exercise, weightlifting, chores)
Avoid any activity that poses a risk for contact to the head or falling
Avoid risks to yourself and others (driving a car, riding a bike/ATV...)
<b>Rest and Recovery</b>
Rest, Rest, Rest... Emphasize both physical and mental rest during the first few days until symptoms improve and you are able to participate in normal activities without any worsening of symptoms.
Minimize and restrict time spent on screened devices, especially if symptoms worsen with these activities (Computer, reading, studying, homework, cell phone, video games or television)
Prioritize sleep and rest by maintaining a structured sleep schedule that allows for quality rest at night It is also OK to nap, but quality of sleep at night should be the primary focus
As symptoms resolve, it is important to allow some time for fun, leisure and social interactions if activity does not worsen symptoms or involve risk for additional head injury
Manage your stress and focus on self-care to promote recovery.

<b>Rest is Important Because it Helps the Brain to Heal</b>
<p>Ignoring your symptoms and trying to <u>"tough it out"</u> often makes symptoms worse. Be patient because healing takes time. You should take it easy both physically and mentally during the first few days following a concussion before slowly and gradually returning to your normal schedule of daily activities. Avoid staying up late, maintain regular bedtime hours and take daytime naps and rest breaks when you feel tired. Light activity around the home is usually okay. However, if your symptoms come back or you develop new symptoms as you become more active, this is a sign that you are pushing yourself too hard. If this occurs, discontinue the activity and take more time to rest and recover.</p> <p><b>"Over-resting"</b> can also be a bad thing and can impact sleep, mood, energy level and symptoms which may also potentially delay recovery. After the acute phase while the brain is in an active state of healing and vulnerability, low levels of daily activity (walking, easy household chores, attending social</p>



## PT | SOLUTIONS<sup>™</sup>

PHYSICAL THERAPY

activities) may actually help you feel better- if the activity does not trigger or worsen your symptoms. You must learn to listen to your body and find the “sweet spot” that does not worsen symptoms.

### Monitor Risk Factors and Long-Term Difficulties

Pay increased attention to any pre-injury difficulties that can worsen following a concussion and prolong recovery. If you already had a medical condition at the time of your concussion (such as chronic headaches), it may take longer for you to recover from a concussion. Anxiety and depression are common following an injury and may also make it harder to adjust to the symptoms of a concussion. It is important to acknowledge the uniqueness of every concussion and that every person responds and recovers differently. For example, it typically takes longer for children and adolescents to recover. There are also additional risk factors which can complicate recovery such as if an individual's has a pre-existing history of neurological conditions (e.g., seizures, CP, headaches), psychiatric history (e.g., anxiety, bipolar, depression, ADHD) or learning difficulties/disabilities. Age is also an important factor as youth typically require more time to recover from a concussion. Every concussion is unique and warrants an individualized plan targeted toward the severity of injury, specific needs and symptoms of the individual.

Keep your healthcare team informed to individualize a treatment plan towards your child's unique needs. Remember, the younger the athlete, the longer recovery typically takes, with at least 80% of high-schoolers expected to fully recovery within 2-3 weeks of their injury.

### Returning to School/Work After a Concussion:

Some individuals recovering from a brain injury may need to miss some school/work when significant physical symptoms and cognitive difficulties limit their ability to meet acceptable standards. It is not recommended to return to school/work too soon because activity can trigger symptoms and potentially delay recovery. Conversely, it is also not recommended to over-rest and remove a student from school/work for more than a few days (unless medically necessary) as this can create additional challenges and stress from falling behind and disrupting their normal routine.

### For More Information and Resources for Parents, Athletes, Coaches and Schools

- *The Center of Disease Control* ([www.cdc.gov/Concussion](http://www.cdc.gov/Concussion))
- <http://www.sportsneuropsychologysociety.com/resources>