

Concussion Recovery 101

A concussion is a brain injury often (but not always) caused by a hit to the head, with or without a loss of consciousness. Most people (80-90%) who experience a concussion fully recover. Symptoms can be physical, behavioural and/or cognitive.

Physical

Headache
Nausea or vomiting
Blurred or double vision
Balance problems
Dizziness
Sensitivity to light or noise
Ringing in the ears

Behavioural

Frustration
Anger
Feeling down or depressed
Anxious
Sleeping more than usual
Difficulty falling asleep
Tearful

Cognitive

Feeling “slowed down”
Difficulty concentrating
Feeling dazed
Memory problems
Difficulty multitasking
“Not my self”
Feeling foggy

First 24-48 Hours after Concussion: Rest!

Family Family interactions can be noisy and involve lots of mental work. Let your family know about your situation and that you may need to excuse yourself from social situations or delegate responsibilities until you have recovered. This includes child care.

Work/School 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.

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

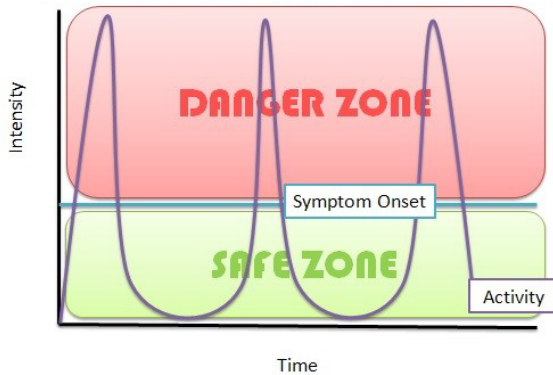
Sport/Physical Activity Limit physical activity so that you do not bring on your symptoms. Walking, yoga and other gentle exercise is fine, as long as your symptoms do not increase.

Ideas for Rest **Podcasts:** Some of my favourites include Serial, TedTalks, This American Life, Embedded, NPR’s Wait Wait Don’t Tell Me and Ted Radio Hour.

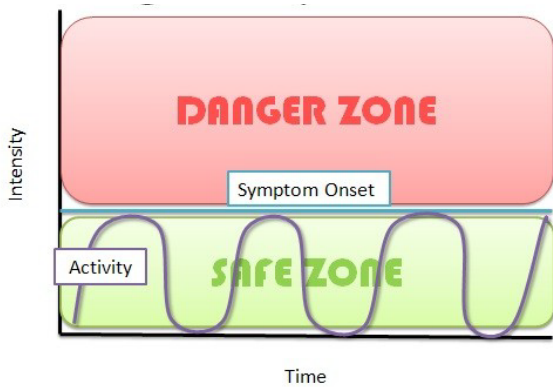
Mindfulness: Mindfulness practice, or meditation, helps settle symptoms associated with concussion. A good resource is the Calm app, available on both iOS and Android with several guided meditations available for free.

The Next 12 Days - Gradual Return

Research shows most people fully recover from concussion within approximately two weeks. However, research also shows returning to normal activity levels too quickly can lead to prolonged symptoms and permanent damage - this is called The Window of Vulnerability.



It is important to pay attention to your symptoms so you can stay in the safe zone and recover from your concussion more quickly. You may begin your day feeling okay, but if you try to complete too many tasks or spend too much time on certain tasks, it may result in symptoms such as headache, fatigue and/or dizziness. This spike of symptoms, and the crash afterwards leads to slower recovery time.



Gradually returning to activities and incorporating rest into the day is key. The goal is to avoid triggering symptoms by keeping your activities in the safe zone. Remember, it may take days or weeks to return to your pre-injury state. Over time your symptoms should begin to subside, and you will be able to participate in more activities for a longer time.

Seek Medical Attention If You Experience:

- 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 3 or more times
- Problems walking and talking
- Seizures
- Changes in behaviour or unusual behaviour
- Double or blurred vision
- Changes in speech - slurred, difficult to understand

Before your Appointment:

- Make sleep a priority by going to bed and waking up at approximately the same time every day and getting at least 7-9 hours per night
- Avoid screens (TV, phone, computer, etc) in the hour before going to bed
- Avoid napping during the day; if you require a nap, limit it to 30-45 minutes
- Keep a daily log or diary of your day. Include what you do and how you feel throughout the day
- Start with gentle walking or yoga daily
- Put your phone on Night Shift - find it in Settings > Display & Brightness (iPhone)

