



Concussion/ Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

****Read this information sheet only if reading does not bother you. Otherwise, get a friend or family member to read it to you.****

You had a mild brain injury or what is sometimes called a concussion. Most people recover quickly following a mild brain injury. A few people may experience symptoms over a longer period.

HOW TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AT HOME

The First 24-48 Hours After Injury

There is a small risk of you developing serious complications so you should be watched closely by another adult for 24 hours after the accident. Warning signs of serious complications are described on back page, under Return to Emergency.

- + **Rest/Sleeping:** Rest (both physical and mental) and avoid strenuous activity for at least 24 hours. It is alright for you to sleep tonight but you should be checked (but not woken up) every four hours.
- + **Driving:** DO NOT drive for at least 24 hours. You should not drive until you feel much better and can concentrate properly. Talk to your doctor.
- + **Drinking/Drugs:** DO NOT drink alcohol or take sleeping pills or recreational drugs in the next 48 hours. All of these can make you feel worse. They also make it hard for other people to tell whether the injury is affecting you or not.

- + **Pain Relief:** Take any medications the doctor may have prescribed for you, or take nonprescription acetaminophen (Tylenol) for headache.
- + **Sports:** DO NOT return to sports until you have received medical clearance from your health care provider.

The First 4 Weeks After Injury

You may have some common effects from the brain injury which usually resolve in several weeks to three months. These are called post concussion symptoms. Tiredness can exaggerate the symptoms. Return to your normal activities gradually (not all at once) during the first weeks or months. You can help yourself get better by:

- + **Rest/Sleeping:** Your brain needs time to recover. It is important to get adequate amounts of sleep as you may feel more tired than normal and you need to get adequate amounts of both physical and mental rest. Avoid screen time, exercise, & reading.
- + **Driving:** DO NOT drive or operate machinery until you feel much better and can concentrate properly. Talk to your family doctor about your readiness.
- + **Drinking/Drugs:** DO NOT drink alcohol or use recreational drugs until you are fully recovered. They will make you feel much worse. DO NOT take medication unless advised by your doctor.

Concussion/ Mild Traumatic Brain Injury - Continued

- + **Work/Study:** You may need to take time off work or study until you can concentrate better. Most people need a day or two off work but are back full time in less than 2 weeks. How much time you need off work or study will depend on the type of job you do. See your family doctor and let your employer or teachers know if you are having problems at work or with study. You may need to return to study or work gradually.
- + **Sport/Lifestyle:** It is dangerous for the brain to be injured again if it has not recovered from the first injury. Talk to your family doctor about the steps you need to take to gradually increase physical activity and return to play. If in doubt, sit out.
- + **Relationships:** Sometimes your symptoms will affect your relationship with family and friends. You may suffer irritability and mood swings. See your family doctor if you or your family are worried.

Recovery

- + You should start to feel better within a few days and be 'back to normal' within about 4 weeks.
- + Your family doctor will monitor your symptoms and may refer you to a specialist if you do not improve over 4 weeks up to 3 months.

WHEN TO GET HELP

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if you are experiencing any of the following:

- + Fainting or blacking out, drowsiness, or can't be woken up.
- + A constant severe headache or a headache that gets worse.
- + Vomiting or throwing up two or more times.

- + Cannot remember new events, recognize people or places (increased confusion).
- + Acting strange, saying things that do not make sense (change in behaviour).
- + Having a seizure (jerking of the body or limbs).
- + Inability to move parts of your body, weakness in arms or legs, or clumsiness.
- + Blurred vision, double vision or slurred speech.
- + Being unsteady on your feet or loss of balance.
- + Continual fluid or bleeding from the ear or nose.

See your family doctor if you are experiencing any of the following:

- + You are not starting to feel better within a few days of your injury.
- + You need a prescription refill.
- + You need help completing paperwork regarding your injuries or time away from work or school.

TO LEARN MORE ASK

- + Your family doctor.
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca

RECOMMENDED FOLLOW UP

- ☐ Follow up with your primary care provider in ____ days.

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Find this information sheet on the BC Emergency Medicine Network website:

www.bcemn.ca/clinical_resource/concussion/