

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.



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When to Get Help

Go to the nearest Emergency Department or Urgent Care Centre if you experience:

- 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 not starting to feel better within 14 days of your injury.
- You need a prescription refill.
- You need help completing paperwork regarding your injuries or time away from work or school.

Recommended Follow-Up

Follow up in ___ days.

Name of Provider
Reason
Date/Time
Location
Contact Info

To Learn More:

- Ask your health care provider.
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca



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 injury. Warning signs of serious complications are described below, under “When to Get Help.”

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 for guidance.

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. Please refer to our Pain Control information sheet for more detail.

(https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/pain-control/)

Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Discharge Instructions - continued

Notes:

SPORTS

DO NOT return to sports until you have received medical clearance from your health care provider.

HYDRATION

Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.

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 doing the following:

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, and reading whenever possible for the first few days, and gradually increase screen time and reading, as tolerated.

DRIVING

DO NOT drive or operate machinery until you feel much better and can concentrate properly. Talk to your 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.

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.

Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Discharge Instructions - continued

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.

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Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:

https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/concussion/

Notes:

Additional Information

- Watch this video for more information on concussions:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCCD52Pty4A>
- Pain Control Information Sheet:
https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/pain-control/

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