

Recovering from Post Concussion Symptoms

What is a concussion or a mild traumatic brain injury?

- A concussion may be caused by a direct blow or jolt to your head, face and neck
- A concussion causes disruption of normal brain functioning
- You probably had a concussion if you were dazed or confused after your injury, lost consciousness (knocked out), or can't remember what happened for a short time after your injury

What are the common symptoms and their duration?

- The most frequent symptoms are headaches, tiredness, dizziness, sleep disturbance and difficulties with concentration and learning new things. You may also feel anxious, worried, depressed and irritable
- You may experience none, a few, or many of these symptoms, these symptoms are part of the normal recovery process
- Symptoms may become more apparent when you return to work, school or your full daily routine
- Recovery from concussion varies from person to person. Most people start to feel better within hours or days; however, some symptoms may last for days, weeks or longer.

The first 24 hours after injury

- For the first 24 hours after your injury you must have someone with you. This person must wake you up every 1 to 2 hours and check for the following symptoms:
 - Persistent vomiting, stiff neck and headaches
 - Unequal pupils (one pupil large, one small)
 - Confusion or unusual drowsiness
 - Convulsions or unconsciousness
 - Stumbling or other problems with normal use of arms or legs
 - Numbness in arm or legs
 - Persistent runny nose

Go to Emergency if any of these symptoms develop

- Follow a clear liquid diet for 12-24 hours

Vancouver General Hospital **604-875-4995**
Jim Pattison Pavilion, North
Ground Floor, 920 W. 10th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 1M9

UBC Hospital **604-822-7662**
Koerner Pavilion
2211 Wesbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 2B5

How can I help with my recovery?

Rest:

- After 24 hours you may still need to rest for a few more days, avoid strenuous exercise
- Make sure you get a good nights sleep, talk to your doctor if you have difficulty sleeping
- Tiredness can result in an increase of your symptoms

Health:

- Do not drink alcohol or take other substances if you are still experiencing symptoms, as brain healing may be slowed down
- Only take medicine prescribed by the doctor
- Eat lightly for the first 1-2 days after your injury

Exercise and sport:

- You can start light aerobic exercise such as walking and stationery bike once you are symptom free
- Gradually increase activity intensity so long as you remain symptom free
- Do not put yourself at risk for another concussion; avoid contact or recreational sports where there is a risk of you getting hit on the head, e.g. hockey, soccer, football, skiing, snow boarding, cycling until your recovery is complete.
- Always wear proper protective equipment

Driving:

- Do not drive for 24 hours after your injury
- You may be slow to react for several more days, you should not start to drive again until you are symptom free. Then, start with caution and avoid long trips or heavy traffic
- Ask your doctor when you can drive, ride a bike or operate heavy machinery

Daily Activities, Work or School:

- Resume activities gradually, a little at a time
- Pace yourself
- If you don't feel your normal self and cannot concentrate you are unlikely to be much use at school or work, and it is better to take a few days off
- Plan a gradual return to work or school
- Reduce your workload initially and build in rest periods
- Modify or simplify the activities you do
- Allow yourself more time to complete tasks or projects
- Write things down if you find it hard to remember, make lists and use a daily planner
- Try to do one thing at a time if you feel overwhelmed
- If you are easily distracted, work in a quiet, distraction free place
- Keep stress level low as stress may result in an increase of your symptoms

Making important decisions:

- It may be helpful to consult with family or a close friend in the first few weeks after your injury

Where can I get help?

If you had a recent concussion and would like to talk to someone about your recovery, please call the:

Early Response Brain Injury Service

An early intervention and follow up service for people with a concussion or mild traumatic brain injury, offered by GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre at: **(604) 714-4186**

For more copies, email learn@vanhosp.bc.ca and quote Catalogue No. **FM.331.R245**

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The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.