

# HEALING FROM YOUR CONCUSSION



Parachute  
Concussion Series

## What is a concussion?

A concussion is a brain injury that can't be seen on X-rays or scans. A concussion affects how your brain works, usually for a short time.

## What causes a concussion?

Any blow or hit to your head, face or neck can cause a concussion. You can also get a concussion from a hit to your body if the force causes your brain to move around inside your head. Concussions can happen during sports like hockey, soccer, or volleyball or during car crashes or falls.

## When should I think I might have a concussion?

You might have a concussion if you take a blow to the head, face, neck, or body and show any signs or symptoms of a concussion. Just one sign or symptom is enough to get checked out.

## What could it feel like if I have a concussion?

Symptoms are warnings that something may be wrong. You don't need to be knocked out (black out) to have a concussion, and you may not even notice symptoms until the next day. Common symptoms are:

### PHYSICAL



- Headaches or head pressure
- Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Blurred or fuzzy vision
- Balance problems

### MENTAL



- Difficulty remembering
- Difficulty reading
- Difficulty working on a computer
- Feeling slowed down
- Not thinking clearly
- Feeling tired or having no energy

### EMOTIONAL



- Easily upset or angered
- Sadness
- Nervous or anxious
- Feeling more emotional

### SLEEP



- Sleeping more or less
- Having a hard time falling asleep



## What could other people notice if I have a concussion?

Signs of a concussion are:

- Lying still on the ground or ice
- Slow to get up
- Confusion or can't answer questions
- Blank stare
- Difficulty standing or walking
- Injury to the face
- Holding their head

## What should I do if I have a concussion?

If you think you have a concussion, you should stop the activity you are doing right away and see a medical doctor or nurse. You should also get a note from a doctor or nurse before returning to contact sports.

## When should I go back to see a doctor or nurse?

You should go back to see the doctor or nurse if your symptoms get worse including:

- Feeling more confused
- Headache keeps getting worse
- Vomiting more than once
- Seizures
- Not waking up
- Trouble walking
- Difficulty talking
- Strange behavior



## What can I do to help heal myself from a concussion?

It is important that you take time to heal and balance your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness. Below is a list of ideas that can help with healing in these four key directions.

### Spiritual - “I feel that I have hope”

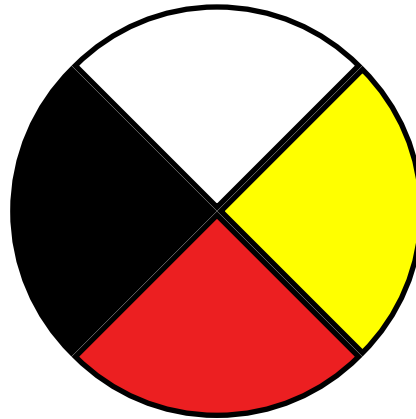
- Don't use any drugs or alcohol because they can make concussion symptoms worse
- Spend time and talk with family, a friend, teacher, Elder or counsellor
- Participate in community events and healing rituals that don't make you feel worse
- Speak with someone you know who has had a concussion

### Emotional - “I feel that I belong”

- Remember that it is common to feel more sad, nervous, or emotional after a concussion
- Try not to do activities that can be stressful
- Take time to relax
- Make sure you get enough sleep and rest
- If you are worried about feeling more sad or nervous than normal, tell a parent, friend, teacher, Elder, doctor or nurse

### Mental - “I feel a sense of meaning”

- Remember that it is common to have trouble concentrating, remembering and paying attention after a concussion
- Limit mental activity and schoolwork to a level that does not make your symptoms worse
  - Remember to take breaks if you start to feel worse
  - If you are having a hard time with schoolwork, tell a parent, friend, teacher, Elder, doctor or nurse
  - Keep in touch! It is normal to feel disconnected from other people after a concussion. Participating in community or family events that don't make your symptoms worse can help you feel connected.



### Physical - “I feel that I have purpose”

- Remember that physical and mental activities can make your concussion symptoms worse
- Only do physical activity that does not make you feel worse
- Try not to do activities where you could hurt your head
- Be sure to drink enough water and eat regular, healthy meals
- Make sure you go to scheduled appointments with your doctor or nurse

## When can I go back to school, sports, and outdoor activities?

It is important that you make a slow (step-by-step) return to school and sports after a concussion. Each step should take one day. If symptoms return, go back to the last step and try it again until you can do it without feeling worse. Always get a doctor's note before returning to contact sports.

### Return to School Steps

Stage	Activity	Example
1	Activities at home that do not make you feel worse	Activities that do not make symptoms worse (e.g. reading, texting, screen time) Start at 5-15 minutes at a time
2	School activities	Homework, reading or other activities outside of the classroom
3	Return to school part-time	Getting back to school for a few hours or half days
4	Return to school full-time	Slow return to full days at school

### Return to Sport/Play Steps

Stage	Activity	Example
1	Physical activities that do not make you feel worse	Walking at home or in school
2	Light physical activity	Jogging or stationary cycling at slow to medium speed. No weight training.
3	Sport-specific exercise	Running or skating drills. No drills with risk of head injury
4	Non-contact practice	Practice without body contact. Gym class activities without risk of head injury
5	Full contact practice	Full practices after doing full time school and getting a doctor's note
6	Return to sport	Normal game play

After you are back to school and sports without symptoms you can return to activities such as skating, hunting, and riding bikes, snowmobiles and ATVs.

## How long will it take to heal?

Most people will get better in 1 to 4 weeks but some can take longer.

## What can happen if I go back to sports too early after a concussion?

If you go back to sports too early after a concussion, you can have another injury that can lead to worse or longer-lasting symptoms, or you can have a more serious brain injury. Make sure you take the time you need to heal.

## How can I help prevent concussions?

To prevent concussions, follow the rules of your sport, respect others, avoid head contact, and tell parents, teachers, coaches, or other trusted adults if you think you have a concussion or if your teammate might have one. Always wear helmets during outdoor activities such as skating or riding bikes, snowmobiles or ATVs.

## How can I learn more about concussions?

To learn more about concussions please visit: [parachute.ca/concussion](http://parachute.ca/concussion)

