



This tool is a guideline for managing an individual's return to work following a concussion and does not replace medical advice. Every concussion is unique, and recovery is very different for each individual. Timelines and activities may vary based on direction from a doctor, nurse practitioner, or healthcare professional with relevant training. It is important to get medical clearance before returning to high-risk activities.

## Return to Work

STEP 1:	STEP 2:	STEP 3:	STEP 4:
<p><b>Activities of daily living and relative rest*</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum of 24-48 hours</li> <li>• Activities at home such as social interactions and light walking that do not result in more than mild and brief** exacerbation (worsening) of concussion symptoms.</li> <li>• Examples:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing meals</li> <li>• Household</li> <li>• Light walking</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Minimize screen time for first 24-48 hours following concussion.</li> <li>• Avoid driving during the first 24-48 hours after a concussion.</li> <li>• Contact workplace to discuss a tailored Return to Work plan.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Work activities (at work, as tolerated)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medically unnecessary delays in Return to work should be avoided.</li> <li>• Individuals are encouraged to remain at, or promptly return, to some form of productive work, provided it does not pose risk of re-injury.</li> <li>• Reading or other cognitive activities.</li> <li>• Take breaks and adapt activities if concussion symptom exacerbation (worsening) is more than mild and brief**.</li> <li>• Use of devices with screens may be gradually resumed, as tolerated.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Part-time or full-time days at work (if needed)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradually reintroduce work activities, according to your graduated return to work plan.</li> <li>• May require accommodations, such as:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partial work days with access to breaks throughout the day</li> <li>• Extra time for tasks</li> <li>• Access to a quiet, distraction-free work environment</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gradually reduce accommodations and increase workload until full days without concussion-related accommodations are tolerated.</li> <li>• Accommodations can be phased out in "trial" periods, to ensure that they are no longer needed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activities of daily living, as tolerated</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After a maximum of 24-48 hours after injury, BEGIN STEP 2</li> </ul>
<p><b>Return to work full-time</b></p> <p>Return to full days at work without requiring accommodations (related to the concussion). Note: Only return to job duties that may have safety implications for you or others (e.g., operating heavy equipment, working from heights) when cleared by a doctor, nurse practitioner, or licensed healthcare professional.</p>	<p><b>Work activities (at work, as tolerated)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase tolerance to work-related activities and connect socially with peers/colleagues.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Gradually reduce accommodations and increase workload</b></p>	<p><b>Return to Work completed</b></p>

Returning to work is an individual process, in some instances workers may return to regular duties, while others may need accommodations or placement in a completely different job function. Progression through the strategy may be slowed when there is more than a mild and brief symptom exacerbation. Therefore, each program should be individually prescribed and should support the reintegration and rehabilitation of the person with the injury or disability back into the workplace. Written determination of medical clearance should be provided before full return to work, as required by workplace or occupational health and safety organizations. Driving should resume after consultation with a doctor, nurse practitioner, or healthcare professional. Progression through the strategy may be slowed when there is more than a mild and brief symptom exacerbation. Relative rest: activities of daily living including walking and other light physical and cognitive activities are permitted as tolerated. Mild exacerbation (worsening) of symptoms: No more than a 2-point increase when compared with the pre-activity value on a 0-10-point symptom severity scale; "Brief" exacerbation of symptoms: Worsening of symptoms for up to 1 hour. \*\*0-10-point symptom severity scale: Please see the Visual Analog Scale at [tinyurl.com/vas2023](http://tinyurl.com/vas2023) for an example of a 0-10 symptom severity scale.

Version 3: November 2023 © BCIRPU. All rights reserved.



A significant impact or motion to the head or body that can cause the brain to move inside the skull

**STOP**

**REMOVE FROM ACTIVITY IMMEDIATELY AND ASSESS FOR RED FLAGS**

**RED FLAGS**

- Neck pain or tenderness
- Seizure, 'fits', or convulsion
- Loss of vision or double vision
- Loss of consciousness
- Increased confusion or deteriorating conscious state (becoming less responsive, drowsy)
- Weakness or numbness/tingling in more than one arm or leg
- Repeated vomiting
- Severe or increasing headache
- Increasingly restless, agitated, or combative

**IF YES TO ANY OF THE ABOVE:**  
Call an ambulance or seek immediate medical care

**IF NO TO ALL RED FLAGS:**  
Assess for signs and symptoms of concussion

**FOLLOW MEDICAL ADVICE, AND:**

Follow initial period of relative rest (i.e., activities of daily living including walking and other light physical and cognitive activities are permitted as tolerated) for a maximum of 24-48 hours post-injury.

Engage in light physical and cognitive activity that does not result in more than mild and brief\* exacerbation (worsening) of concussion symptoms.

- Limit screen time for the first 24-48 hours (smartphones, computers, TV)
- Engage in light cognitive activities (e.g. reading)
- Engage in light physical activity (e.g. walking)

**Note:** Sleep is important! Do not wake during the night if sleeping comfortably

\*Mild exacerbation (worsening) of symptoms: No more than a 2-point increase when compared with the pre-activity value on a 0-10-point symptom severity scale. "Brief" exacerbation of symptoms: Worsening of symptoms for up to 1 hour.

**CONCUSSION SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

- Headache / Pressure in head
- Balance problems / Dizziness
- Nausea or vomiting
- Drowsiness
- Blurred vision
- Light / Sound sensitivity
- Fatigue or low energy
- "Don't feel right"
- Neck pain
- More emotional
- More irritable
- Sadness
- Nervous or anxious
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering
- Feeling slowed down
- Feeling like "in a fog"
- Trouble falling asleep

**IF YES TO ANY OF THE ABOVE:**  
SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION from a doctor, nurse practitioner, or licensed healthcare professional with relevant training

**IF NO SYMPTOMS:**  
Limit physical activity and watch for concussion signs and symptoms for up to 48 hours

**IF SYMPTOMS OBSERVED WITHIN 48 HOURS**

**IF NO SYMPTOMS OBSERVED AFTER 48 HOURS**

**AFTER 48 HOURS:**

- Follow Return to Work strategy
- Follow Return to Activity strategy
- Follow Return to School strategy
- Follow Return to Sport strategy

**MENTAL HEALTH**

- During the course of recovery from a concussion, seek medical attention for mental health challenges as needed, such as:
- More emotional
  - Irritability
  - Sadness
  - Nervousness or anxiousness
  - Trouble falling asleep
  - Depression

**RESUME NORMAL ACTIVITY**

For more information on concussions, visit [cattonline.com](http://cattonline.com).