

Caring for Your Concussion

- A concussion is a **brain injury**. Like any medical diagnosis, it will require direct physician involvement to guide a safe return to school, work, play, and life.
- Worsening symptoms may indicate a more serious injury. Return to the Emergency Room if: headaches become more severe, pupils are unequal in size, or if you experience any of the following: repeated vomiting, slurred speech, decreased level of consciousness/increased drowsiness, seizures or convulsions, weakness or numbness in arms/legs/face, mood changes, or other neurologic or medical concerns.
- Did you know that it may take up to 7 days for symptoms of a concussion to present? Symptoms can increase with cognitive, physical, or emotional triggers. This is why it is important to follow-up with a physician (Medical Doctor) within two weeks after a concussion has been diagnosed.
- Each Concussion is unique— each person may experience different symptoms, triggers, and timeline for recovery. Your concussion requires an individualized treatment approach and proper medical follow-up based on your specific symptoms.
- While rest in the first 24-48 hours following a concussion may be beneficial, *prolonged* rest has NOT been found to improve concussion recovery, and may even delay recovery. After an initial period of rest, resuming a normal daily routine with regular sleeping habits is important to help your brain and body recover.
- Concussion symptoms increase when the brain is overstimulated by physical, cognitive (thinking) activities, or in certain social settings/environments (bright lights, loud noise, or crowds). While some patients find screens (TV, computer, cellphone) or reading increases their symptoms, others may tolerate these activities. *Reducing* time spent on devices/stimuli to keep symptom levels low may be recommended.
- Students should have regular medical follow-up after a concussion to monitor recovery and help with return to school. While students may be absent from school in the first days following a concussion, prolonged absence from school is not recommended. If you need more support and accommodations for school, your physician may refer you to a physician-led multi-disciplinary concussion clinic with experience in individualized learning plans following a concussion.
- Children and adolescents should NOT return to sports/competition UNTIL they have successfully returned to school, however early introduction of reduced physical activity is appropriate.
- A gradual, step-wise return to cognitive and physical activity is best following concussion. This process is individualized, guided by your symptoms (low to no symptoms), and supervised by your physician. Written clearance documentation will be required from a physician (Medical Doctor) before you return to a sport or activity that carries a risk of contact/ possible head injury.
- The average concussion may last approximately 10-14 days in adults, and up to 4 weeks in children and adolescents. If symptoms persist beyond this, a physician with experience in concussion management together with an inter-disciplinary concussion clinic is recommended. When seeking care, ensure the clinic you choose offers: Direct access to and continued involvement of a medical doctor with experience in concussion management, a network or interdisciplinary team of three or more different regulated health care providers, and a clinic that can provide a full spectrum of concussion care from early management to that of a prolonged course for individuals with persistent symptoms when needed.