

Recovery from a Concussion



Read this brochure to learn more about:

- What to expect after a concussion
- Symptoms to watch for
- What to do in case of emergency
- How The Hull-Ellis Concussion and Research Clinic can help you



A head start on recovery.



Patient Education



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What can I expect after a concussion?



A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury (TBI) also referred to as a “mild” TBI.

A concussion may change the way you think and feel. Most symptoms go away within 7 to 14 days without any treatment. Most people recover from a concussion quickly and fully.

After a concussion, it is normal to have these symptoms:

- Headache
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Nausea (feeling like you want to throw up)
- Not balanced or dizzy
- Vision changes
- Trouble thinking clearly
- Trouble remembering new information
- Fatigue (feeling very tired)
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling irritated, nervous, sad or more emotional than usual



You may have symptoms right after the concussion or they can start later. Many people have only 1 or 2 symptoms while others may have more.



Watch to see if these symptoms get worse within the first 24 to 48 hours after your injury. If any of these symptoms get worse, call your doctor right away, go to the nearest hospital emergency department, or call 911.

- Vomiting that won't stop
- A severe headache or a headache that gets worse
- One pupil is larger than the other
- You can't stay awake during times you would normally be awake
- Confusion, memory loss or any other changes in your thinking
- Weakness or having trouble with your coordination
- Slurred speech
- Seizures
- Unusual behaviours



What can I do to feel better after a concussion?

At this time there is no “cure” for concussions. But there are ways to help you cope with your symptoms. Here are some tips to help you.

Get enough rest and sleep.

- Rest your body and mind as much as you need to.
- Avoid doing activities that make you feel very tired. How long it will take for you to return to your usual activities depends on many things. Everyone is different.

Talk to you doctor about when it's safe to drive again.

Don't drink alcohol or do drugs.

- Drinking alcohol, taking sleeping pills or recreational drugs can make you feel worse. They also make it difficult for other people to tell whether the injury is affecting you or not.

Talk to your doctor about what pain relief is right for you.



Don't play sports again until your doctor or health care team says it's safe to do so.

- It is dangerous for the brain to be injured again if it has not recovered from the first concussion. Talk to your doctor about what you need to do before playing sports again. **The rule is: If in doubt, sit out.**

Take time off work or school if you need to.

- You may need to take time off work or school until you can concentrate better. Many people need some time off work but return full-time in less than 2 weeks. How much time you need will depend on the type of job you do.
- Let your employer or teachers know if you are having problems at work or school. You may need to return gradually.
- See your doctor about returning to work or school.

Ask us how concussions can affect your personal relationships.

- Sometimes your symptoms will affect your relationship with family and friends. You may feel irritated and have mood swings. Tell your doctor if you are worried about your personal relationships.



Know about your recovery.

- You should start to feel better within a few days. Most people who have a concussion recover within 7 to 14 days, but some people take longer to recover. Not everyone has the same symptoms or recovers at the same time. If you are worried that your recovery is taking too long, or if your symptoms are getting worse, see to your doctor.

How can our Clinic help?

The Hull-Ellis Concussion and Research Clinic believes it's important to manage concussion recovery early. The Clinic is located at The University Centre of Toronto Rehab, part of the University Health Network.

We offer concussion care for patients within days of their concussion diagnosis. Our patients receive care and follow-up services from a team of doctors, a clinic coordinator and other health care providers as needed.

Research is an important part of what we do in our Clinic. As a patient you may also take part in our research studies. We value research because we want to be leaders in the way people receive concussion care.

Need more health information?

UHN Patient & Family Learning Centres/Libraries offer reliable and up-to-date consumer health information to UHN patients and families. Toronto Rehab patients, families and caregivers can email health information requests to: tgpen@uhn.ca. Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for more health information.

Information in this booklet came from The Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation, originally adapted from the Motor Accidents Authority of NSW, Guidelines for Mild Traumatic Brain Injury following Closed Head Injury (MAA NSW, 2008) and the Information about Mild Head Injury or Concussion booklet (Ponsford, Willmott, Nelms & Curran, 2004).



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