



What is a concussion?

A concussion is a range of symptoms that you develop following a knock to the head. You may develop one or many of the following common concussion symptoms:

- Significant headaches, dizziness and / or nausea
- Changes to emotional regulation, sleep-wake cycle and / or exercise tolerance
- Constant tiredness or fatigue
- Sensitivity to light, noise and / or movement
- Difficulties getting words out in a timely manner
- Poor concentration, day-to-day memory and / or ability to think and respond quickly

Effects of concussion

Current research highlights that a concussion will typically not cause structural damage to your brain, as evidenced by scans (eg. CT or MRI). However, a concussion does cause a change in the chemical flow within your brain and specifically in your autonomic nervous system, that controls many of everyday functions. As a result of the concussion, you no longer have the same flow of oxygen to your brain or necessary resources (food, water or sleep) to manage your usual function. For most people, symptoms improve within 1-4 weeks.

Returning to work / study / sport

When returning to work, study and sport, you need to consider if you have all the skills to perform at the standard you usually would and if you can sustain that performance day after day.

For more information, contact the State Head Injury Unit:

Tel: (08) 6457 4488

Email: shiu@health.wa.gov.au

How to manage concussion

You should take a break for 24-48 hours. If you experienced a knock to the head while playing sport, you should not continue to play if you feel concussive symptoms coming on. This is so that you do not increase symptoms or slow down the recovery process.

It is equally important to then gradually return back to usual activity with:

- Low intensity aerobic exercise (walking, light jogging)
- Light mental stimulation (TV, computer, social media, board games, book)
- Gently challenge your sensitivity to noise, movement and light (start with night mode on screens)

Importance of self-care

- You need to replenish your resources by eating and drinking water regularly, taking mini refresh breaks throughout the day and aim for a good night's sleep
- Manage headaches with paracetamol, if required
- It is helpful to consider who around you can support you at this time (your partner, family members or supportive friends). Someone to help pick up the slack so you can give yourself the time you need to recover from the symptoms.
- Stress and anxiety will only slow your recovery. You need to be able to find somewhere inside yourself that you can find peace and let your concerns go. This can be as simple as sitting, closing your eyes and chilling out for a few minutes, every hour or so. If intrusive thoughts pop into your head, try to let them go.

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