

# Experiencing effects of a concussion?

## What is a concussion?

A concussion is a mild brain injury caused typically, but not always, by an impact to the head, with or without loss of consciousness. **The majority of people (80-90%) who experience concussion recover with no lingering symptoms. Symptoms can be Physical, Behavioural, and/or Cognitive.**

### Physical

Headache, nausea, vomiting, blurred or double vision, seeing stars, balance problems, dizziness, sensitivity to light or noise, ringing in the ears

### Behavioural

Frustration, anger, feeling down and depressed, anxious, sleeping more than usual, difficulty falling asleep

### Cognitive

Feeling “slowed down”, difficulty concentrating, feeling dazed, memory problems, and being unable to multi-task, not your old self.

## The first 48 hours after concussion—REST!

### Family

Family interactions can be noisy and involve lots of mental work. Let your family know about your situation and that you may need to excuse yourself from social situations or delegate responsibilities until you have recovered. This includes child care.

### Employer/School

Sometimes the demands of work/school can trigger symptoms following a concussion. You may need to take some time off work/school to rest and recover; or perhaps reduce your responsibilities for a short period of time.

### Driving

Reaction time, vision, and thinking may be impaired by a concussion. Do not drive a car until your doctor advises you it is okay.

### Drugs

Using non-prescription drugs (including alcohol) may add to concussion symptoms and increase recovery time.

### Sports/Physical Activity

Limit physical exertion and exercise. Do not participate in activities where you may experience another impact to the head.

## Concussion is an INVISIBLE INJURY

Because you are able to walk and talk, you may look and appear ‘okay’ to others, while in reality you are struggling.

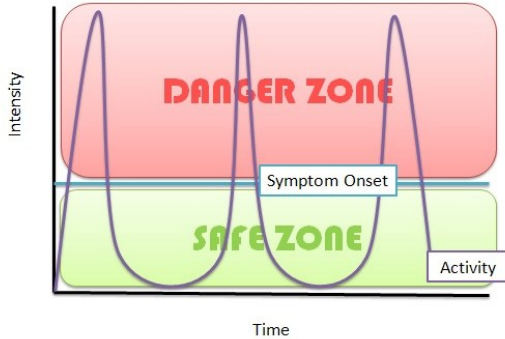
## SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF YOU EXPERIENCE:

- Stiff neck
- Fluid and/or blood leaking from nose or ears
- Difficulty waking up
- Difficulty remaining awake
- Fever
- Headache that gets worse, lasts a long time, or is not relieved by over-the-counter pain relievers
- Vomiting three or more times
- Problems walking and talking
- Problems thinking
- Seizures
- Changes in behaviour or unusual behaviour
- Double or Blurred vision
- Changes in speech (slurred, difficult to understand or does not

# The next 12 days—gradual return

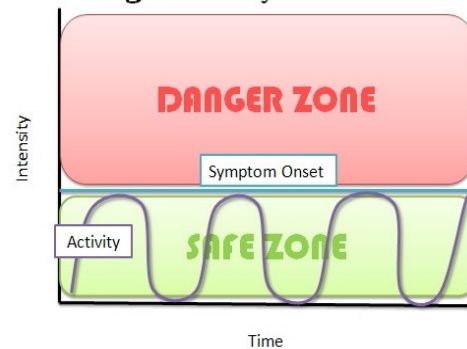
Why wait 12 days after a concussion to return to your normal routine? Research shows most people fully recover from concussion within approximately two weeks. However, research also shows returning to normal activity levels too quickly can lead to prolonged symptoms and permanent damage—this is called the window of vulnerability. Use the techniques below to avoid these issues and quicken your recovery.

## Be Aware of your Symptoms: Avoid the Crash!



It is important to pay attention to your symptoms so you can stay in the safe zone and recover from your concussion more quickly. You may begin your day feeling okay, but if you try to complete too many tasks or spend too much time on certain tasks, it may result in symptoms such as headache, fatigue and/or dizziness. This spike of symptoms, and the crash afterwards leads to slower recovery time. Speed your recovery by avoiding the danger zone and adjusting your activities accordingly.

## Target Activity Pattern



Gradually returning to activities and incorporating rest into the day is key. Many patients try to ignore their symptoms and end up in the danger zone. The goal is to avoid triggering symptoms by keeping your activities in the safe zone. Remember, it may take days or weeks to return to your pre-injury state. Over time your symptoms should begin to subside, and you will be able to participate in more activities for a longer time.

## Physical Rest

You may be physically unable to complete the same activities you could before your concussion. Your brain regulates your heart, and the concussion may affect this regulation. Stop physical activity when you feel your heart racing excessively or when you feel fatigued or the onset of other concussion symptoms.

## Cognitive Rest

Your ability to concentrate, memorize, and process information may be impaired. Even seemingly restful tasks such as reading, watching TV, and computer use may exhaust your mental capacities. Stop these activities with the onset of concussion symptoms such as headache or fatigue.

Parts of your brain may work less effectively after a concussion including messaging, blood flow, and energy use.

It will take time to recover from these effective.

For further information, please refer to the following websites:

[www.sjhc.london.on.ca/abi](http://www.sjhc.london.on.ca/abi)   [www.thinkfirst.ca](http://www.thinkfirst.ca)   [www.concussionsontario.org](http://www.concussionsontario.org)