



MANITOBA ADULT CONCUSSION NETWORK POST-CONCUSSION EDUCATION SHEET

WHAT IS A CONCUSSION?

A concussion is a brain injury that can't be seen on x-rays, CT or MRI scans. It affects the way a person thinks and can cause a variety of symptoms.

WHAT CAUSES A CONCUSSION?

Any blow to the head, face or neck, or somewhere else on the body that causes a sudden jarring of the head may cause a concussion. Examples include getting body-checked in hockey or slipping on ice.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF A CONCUSSION?

A person does not need to be knocked out (lose consciousness) to have had a concussion. Common symptoms include:

- Headaches or head pressure
- Dizziness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Blurred or fuzzy vision
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Balance problems
- Feeling tired or having no energy
- Not thinking clearly
- Feeling slowed down
- Easily upset or angered
- Sadness
- Nervous or anxious
- Feeling more emotional
- Sleeping more or less
- Having a hard time falling asleep
- Difficulty working on a computer
- Difficulty reading
- Unable to learn new information

It is important that ALL adults with a suspected concussion undergo medical assessment by a medical doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant as soon as possible. It is also important that ALL adults with a suspected concussion receive written medical clearance from a medical doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant before returning to sport and work activities. In northern communities medical assessment and clearance can be completed by a nurse with access to a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

WHEN SHOULD I GO BACK TO SEE THE DOCTOR?

Any adult who has been diagnosed with a concussion should seek medical attention at the nearest emergency department immediately if symptoms get worse including.

- Increased confusion
- Worsening headache
- Vomiting more than once
- Seizures
- Not waking up
- Trouble walking
- Slurred speech
- Strange behavior

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP RECOVER FROM A CONCUSSION?

It is important that all adults with a diagnosed concussion take time appropriate steps to promote recovery. Below is a list of suggestions

- Engage in physical activity and exercise only at a level that does not increase symptoms
- Engage in mental activity and schoolwork at a level that does not increase symptoms
- Remember to take breaks if your symptoms increase
- Make sure to drink adequate amounts of water and eat regular and balanced meals
- Make sure to get adequate amounts of sleep



- Avoid using any drugs, alcohol as well activities with a risk of head injury
- Work with your employer to make a gradual return to work
- Limit the use of over-the-counter pain medications (i.e Tylenol) to less 15 days per month and only use as directed.

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO SCHOOL AND SPORTS?

It is important that all adults diagnosed with a concussion follow a step-wise return to school, work and sports-related activities. Return to school and sports should be guided by the Return-to-School and Return-to-Sport Strategies. It is important that student-athletes return to full-time school activities before progressing to stage 5 and 6 of the Return-to-Sport Strategy. In general, each step should take one day to complete. If symptoms recur, stop immediately and go back to the previous stage.

Return to School Strategy:

| Stage | Aim | Activity | Goal of each step |
|-------|--|--|---|
| 1 | Daily activities at home that do not give the student-athlete symptoms | Typical activities of the child during the day as long as they do not increase symptoms (e.g. reading, texting, screen time) Start at 5-15 minutes at a time and gradually build up | Gradual return to typical activities |
| 2 | School activities | Homework, reading or other cognitive activities outside of the classroom | Increase tolerance to cognitive work |
| 3 | Return to school part-time | Gradual introduction of schoolwork. May need to start with a partial school day or with increased breaks during the day | Increase academic activities |
| 4 | Return to school full-time | Gradually progress | Return to full academic activities and catch up on missed school work |

Return to Sport Strategy:

| Stage | Aim | Activity | Goal of each step |
|-------|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | Symptom-limiting activity | Daily activities that do not provoke symptoms | Gradual re-introduction of work/school activities |
| 2 | Light aerobic activity | Walking or stationary cycling at slow to medium pace. No resistance training | Increase heart rate |
| 3 | Sport-specific exercise | Running or skating drills. No head impact activities | Add movement |
| 4 | Non-contact training drills | Harder training drills, e.g. passing drills. May start progressive resistance training | Exercise, coordination and increased thinking |
| 5 | Full contact practice | Following medical clearance and complete return to school | Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff |
| 6 | Return to sport | Normal game play | |

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO WORK?

It is important that all adults work with their medical doctor and employer to develop an individualized Return-to-Work plan that allows the patient to make a gradual return to work. It is important that a Return-to-Work plan assesses the patient’s risk, capacity and tolerance to return to certain work-related activities and tasks.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO RECOVER?

The majority of adults who sustain a concussion will make a complete recovery and return to full-time work with one month. However, some patients experience persistent symptoms that may require additional medical care.



WHAT COULD HAPPEN IF I RETURN TO SPORTS TOO EARLY?

Adults who return to sports or activities with a risk of head injury without medical clearance may be at risk of having another injury that can lead to more severe symptoms, prolonged symptoms or life-threatening brain injury.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT CONCUSSIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES?

To learn more about concussions please visit the following website: <http://www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/item/concussion> or <http://onf.org/documents/guidelines-for-concussion-mtbi-persistent-symptoms-third-edition>