



Concussion in Children



Cork Emergency Medicine

Recovery from concussion

Your child has been diagnosed with a concussion. Common symptoms of concussion are:

Headaches	Difficulty concentrating
Nausea	Difficulty sleeping
Tiredness/fatigue	Memory problems
Dizziness	Being easily annoyed

While most concussions will get better on their own over 2 weeks, 1 in 6 children will still experience symptoms **4 weeks** after their injury. Girls are slightly more prone to experiencing more intense or prolonged symptoms and may need more time to recover. Here are some tips for helping your child recover.

For the first 24-48 hours after injury:

- Rest is important.
- Avoid environments with bright lights or loud noises.
- Avoid screen time (gaming, smartphones etc).
- Avoid intense exercise or tasks need lots of concentration
- Use simple pain killers (paracetamol and ibuprofen) as needed.

Going forward (3-5 days post injury), it is important to reintroduce physical exercise, sports and school work **gradually**.

Here are examples of steps to follow for returning to school and sports.

Rules:

- For return to school, stay at each step detailed below for a minimum of 24 hours.
- For return to sport, stay at each step for a minimum of 48 hours if you are under 20 years of age, or for 24 hours if you are over 20.

If you are concerned, please contact the Emergency Department you first attended:	Mercy University Hospital (021) 230 5011	M-UCC at (St. Mary's Health Campus) (021) 4926900	CUH (021) 4920200	Local Injury Unit Mallow General Hospital (022) 58506	Bantry General Hospital (027) 52900
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- Only move onto the next step if you do not have any symptoms of concussion. If you begin to experience symptoms, go back to the previous step.
- Only being to return to sport once you have successfully returned to school.

Return to school:

Step 1: Try simple daily activities, like gentle walking or reading for short periods (5-10mins) and build up gradually.

Step 2: Try school reading, sums or light homework while at home.

Step 3: Try going to school for a shorter day, or a day with regular breaks. If you have exams coming up, they may need to be postponed.

Step 4: Return to school full time. (Gradually build up to a full day/workload).

Return To Sport:

Step 1: Simple daily activities

Step 2: Gently reintroduce aerobic exercise without resistance e.g. walking, stationary cycling or low intensity swimming.

Step 3: Introduce sport specific exercise like running, warm up drills and individual skills (if a ball is required it must be soft). No contact activities.

Step 4: Introduce co-ordinated skills (passing, shooting etc) and non-contact team play.

Step 5: Return to full contact play. This should occur when you are comfortable to do so, and you have been cleared by your coach and doctor.

Step 6: Return to competition, earliest at 2-3 weeks post injury. For more contact heavy sports, e.g. rugby, the longer time frame is needed.

Most people recover well after a mild head injury. It can take up to 4 weeks for symptoms to resolve, but they should not stop you from doing your day to day activities. If you are still requiring support to return to everyday activities after 4 weeks following a mild head injury, attend your GP for assessment.

Content by Dr Maeve Leonard and Dr Emma Fauteux March 2024

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