



Recovery advice for a recent concussion

Concussion is a form of mild traumatic brain injury. Please see a doctor if you suspect you have had a concussion.

Concussions are termed 'mild' injuries because they are not immediately life threatening. However, **if not treated appropriately, nearly half of concussion patients can experience severe symptoms and take up to 6-12 months to recover.** This pamphlet provides you with information that will help with your recovery.

COMMON CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

Each concussion is different. Meaning the symptoms and time it takes to recover are different from person to person and injury to injury.

PHYSICAL

- Headaches
- Sensitive to lights and sound
- Dizziness
- Balance problems
- Vision problems
- Difficulty exercising



EMOTIONS

- More emotional than normal
- Irritability
- Sadness
- Nervousness



SLEEP

- Fatigue
- Trouble falling asleep
- Sleeping more than usual but still feeling tired



THINKING

- Confusion
- Trouble remembering and concentrating
- Feeling "in a fog"
- Feeling slowed down



SPORT-RELATED CONCUSSION

Sport-related concussion account for 20% of all concussions. After a concussion it is very important to be cleared by a doctor before returning to sport.

Evidence suggests that returning to sport before full recovery after a concussion can increase the risk for future concussions as well as other injuries.

Athletes should be fully back to work/school, symptom free, and able to tolerate high intensity exercise before returning to play. Return to sport should be gradual. If in doubt, sit it out.



NECK PAIN & CONCUSSION

Sometimes the jolt that causes a concussion can also result in a whiplash injury to the neck.

Whiplash can cause symptoms similar to concussion like headache or dizziness. If your neck is very sore you may also need physiotherapy.

DID YOU KNOW?

Concussions happen when a sudden jolt to the head or body causes the brain to shake inside the skull. Concussion symptoms are not always obvious right away. This shaking injures brain cells which disrupts how the brain normally functions.

Even if you recovered quickly from a previous concussion, it does not mean you will recover quickly again. So the current injury needs to be taken seriously.

95% OF CONCUSSIONS OCCUR WITHOUT BEING KNOCKED OUT (LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS).

WHAT CAUSES SYMPTOMS?

When brain cells are injured during a concussion the body immediately starts trying to heal these cells, but this requires lots of energy. Unfortunately, a concussion temporarily interrupts how the brain produces energy.

We experience symptoms like fatigue, sleepiness, brain fog etc, because all of the available energy is going towards healing and not much is left over for other jobs like work or school.

This energy issue typically returns to normal within the first 2-4 weeks post-injury.

Symptoms that last beyond 2-4 weeks might be due to more specific pathways in the brain being injured by the concussion. This is where the support of a multidisciplinary team including a doctor, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, and/or psychologist might be needed.



CONCUSSION RESEARCH IN TAIRĀWHITI

Mātai Medical Research Institute is conducting a research programme to improve our understanding of recent concussions.

The project focuses on improving how to detect/assess concussion and how to measure recovery.

If you would like to learn more about the research and get involved please contact us:

☎ 06 863 1425

✉ info@matai.org.nz

🌐 matai.org.nz

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR SYMPTOMS

During the first 48-72 hours after a concussion, the best thing to do is to take it easy by limiting activities that worsen your symptoms. This gives your brain a head start healing itself. Stay home from work or school if necessary. Prioritise sleep and rest (including naps if required). Drink lots of water and eat healthy foods.

Continuing to rest and avoid activities after the first few days will not help your recovery, in fact it may slow it down. Similarly, trying to tough it out and go fully back to normal activities before you are ready will also slow recovery.

EXAMPLE OF CONTROLLED PROGRESSIVE LOADING

If you have experienced an injury to a muscle or bone before, you probably received some exercises that gradually increased in difficulty over time to help you heal. We follow a similar recipe to help our brain get back to normal after a concussion.

Overall, the goal is to build on small wins each day to get a little better. Avoid pushing too hard too soon as this will cause frustrating set-backs instead of steady improvement.

EXAMPLE:

Work or study involves a lot of thinking or physical work and you cannot make it through a full day without feeling exhausted.

Start small with 1-2 hours of work. If your symptoms start to increase, take a break. If the break settles your symptoms down try another short block of work – if not, take it easy for the rest of the day. The next day try adding a little bit more work, and repeat this process until you are back to half-days, and then full-days without symptoms. In the beginning, use your limited energy on tasks that are most important.

Apply these ideas to other symptoms like: difficulty with screen time, sensitivity to light/sound/busy environments, difficulty exercising, etc.

REFERRAL TO CONCUSSION SERVICES

If your doctor refers you to a local ACC-funded concussion service it is because you may need targeted treatment to assist your recovery.

If you do not immediately receive a referral it means you are more likely to recover quickly without extra care.

However, if your symptoms do not significantly improve within 2-3 weeks of your injury, contact a doctor and request referral. A doctor's referral is required to access ACC-funded concussion services.

The following locations offer concussion services in Tairāwhiti Gisborne:

GENEVA HEALTHCARE

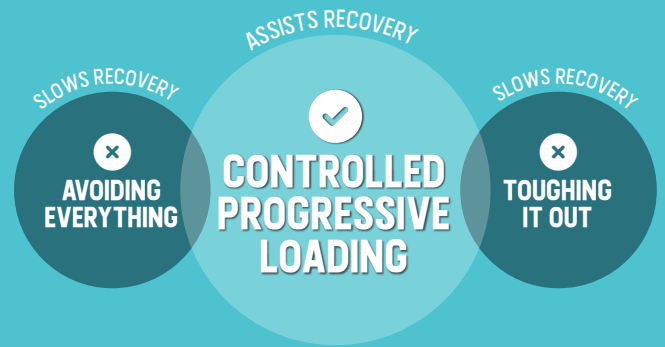
75 Customhouse Street (Three Rivers Medical)

DYNAMIC REHAB

498 Wainui Road

PROACTIVE

379 Gladstone Road



Now the goal is to **progressively reintroduce activities** to your routine that have been affected by concussion day by day **until you feel 100% back to normal.**

RECOVERY EXPECTATIONS

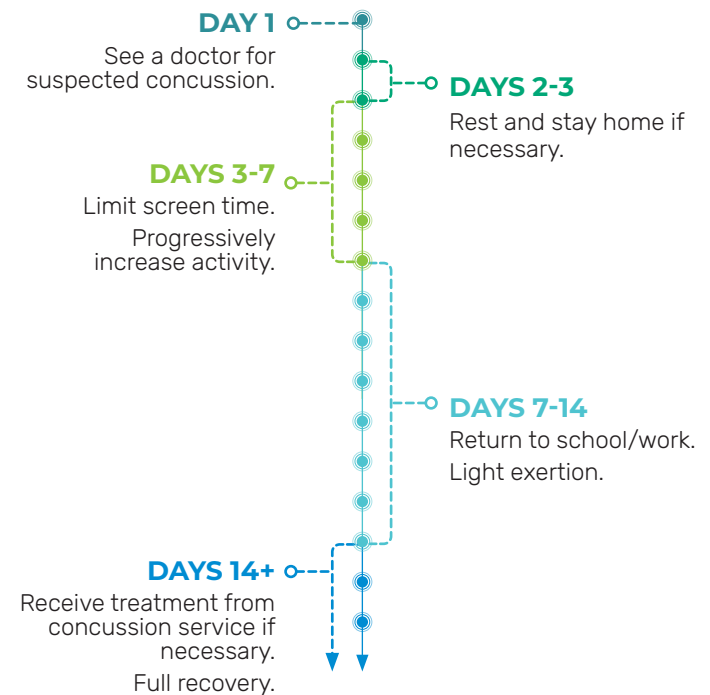
New Zealand data shows that with early education and the right treatment(s):

- About 50% of adults recover by two weeks
- About 77% of adults recover by four weeks
- About 96% of adults recover by eight weeks

Children tend to recover more slowly than adults because their brains are still developing.

People with more severe symptoms in the first few days post-injury tend to recover slower and need more support.

CONCUSSION RECOVERY TIMELINE



RED FLAGS

If at any point after a concussion you are experiencing any of the items below, see a doctor immediately.

- **Severe headache that is getting worse**
- **Fainting**
- **Repeated vomiting**
- **Seizures**
- **Slurred speech**

Consult a doctor before taking medication for concussion symptoms.



Do not drink alcohol or use recreational drugs until you are fully recovered.

