



Parachute
Concussion Series

Strategy for RETURN TO SCHOOL after a Concussion

1. Each stage is at least 24 hours. Move to the next stage only when activities are tolerated without new or worsening symptoms.
2. If symptoms re-appear, return to the previous stage for at least 24 hours.
3. If symptoms don't improve, but continue to get worse, contact your doctor or get medical help immediately.

Cognitive & physical rest
[24-48 hours]



OK if tolerated **Not OK**

- ✓ Short board games
- ✓ Short phone calls
- ✓ Camera photography
- ✓ Crafts
- ✗ School
- ✗ Physical exertion/ stair climbing
- ✗ Organized sports

If tolerated, limited amounts of

- TV
- Computer/cell phone use
- Reading

READY FOR NEXT STAGE?
Symptoms start to improve OR
after resting for 48 hours max.

AT HOME

Stage
1
Light cognitive
activity



OK if tolerated **Not OK**

- ✓ Easy reading
- ✓ Limited TV
- ✓ Drawing/LEGO/ board games
- ✓ Some peer contact
- ✗ School
- ✗ Work
- ✗ Physical exertion/ stair climbing
- ✗ Organized sports

If tolerated, limited amounts of

- Computer/cell phone use

READY FOR NEXT STAGE?
Tolerate 30 mins. of cognitive
activity at home

Stage
2
School-type work/
Light physical activity



OK if tolerated **Not OK**

- ✓ School-type work in 30 min. chunks
- ✓ Light physical activity
- ✓ Some peer contact
- ✗ School attendance
- ✗ Work
- ✗ Physical exertion/ stair climbing
- ✗ Organized sports

READY FOR NEXT STAGE?
Tolerate up to 60 mins. of
cognitive activity in 2-3 chunks

AT SCHOOL

Stage
3a
Part-time school
Light load



OK if tolerated **Not OK**

- ✓ Up to 120 mins. of cognitive activity in chunks
- ✓ Half-days at school, 1-2 times a week
- ✓ Some light physical activity
- ✗ Music/Phys. Ed class
- ✗ Tests/exams
- ✗ Homework
- ✗ Heavy physical loads (e.g. backpack)
- ✗ Organized sports

READY FOR NEXT STAGE?
Tolerate school work up to 120 mins. a day for 1-2 days/week

Stage
3b
Part-time school
Moderate load



OK if tolerated **Not OK**

- ✓ Limited testing
- ✓ School work for 4-5 hours/day in chunks
- ✓ Homework up to 30 mins./day
- ✓ 3-5 days of school/week
- ✓ Decrease learning accommodations
- ✗ Phys. Ed class/ physical exertion
- ✗ Standardized tests/exams
- ✗ Organized sports

READY FOR NEXT STAGE?
Tolerate school work 4-5 hours/ day in chunks for 2-4 days/week

Stage
4a
Nearly normal
workload



OK if tolerated **Not OK**

- ✓ Nearly normal cognitive activities
- ✓ Routine school work as tolerated
- ✓ Homework up to 60 mins./day
- ✓ Minimal learning accommodations
- ✗ Phys. Ed class tests/exams
- ✗ Full participation in organized sports

READY FOR NEXT STAGE?
Tolerate full-time academic load
without worsening symptoms

Stage
4b
Full time



OK if tolerated **Not OK**

- ✓ Normal cognitive activities
- ✓ Routine school work
- ✓ Full curriculum load
- ✓ No learning accommodations
- ✗ Full participation in sports until medically cleared. (See Return-to-Sport Strategy)

READY FOR NEXT STAGE?
Stages 5-6 of the
Return-to-Sport Strategy

After a Concussion:

RETURN-TO-SPORT STRATEGY



Parachute
Concussion Series

A concussion is a serious injury, but you can recover fully if your brain is given enough time to rest and recuperate.

Returning to normal activities, including sport participation, is a step-wise process that requires patience, attention, and caution.

In the Return-to-Sport Strategy:

- ▶ Each stage is at least 24 hours.
- ▶ Move on to the next stage when activities are tolerated without new or worsening symptoms.
- ▶ If any symptoms worsen, stop and go back to the previous stage for at least 24 hours.
- ▶ If symptoms return after medical clearance, follow up with a doctor for re-assessment.

Stage 1: Symptom-limiting activities

After an initial short period of rest of 24 to 48 hours, light cognitive and physical activity can begin, as long as these don't worsen symptoms. You can start with daily activities like moving around the house, simple chores, and gradually introducing school and work activities at home.

Stage 2: Light aerobic activity

Light exercise such as walking or stationary cycling, for 10 to 15 minutes. The duration and intensity of the aerobic exercise can be gradually increased over time if symptoms don't worsen and no new symptoms appear during the exercise or in the hours that follow. No resistance training or other heavy lifting.

Stage 3: Individual sport-specific exercise with no contact

Activities such as skating, running, or throwing can begin for 20 to 30 minutes. There should be no body contact or other jarring motions, such as high-speed stops or hitting a ball with a bat. No resistance training.

Stage 4: Begin training drills with no contact

Add in more challenging drills like passing drills. There should be no impact activities (no checking, no heading the ball, etc.). Start to add in progressive resistance training.

Stage 5: Full contact practice following clearance by a doctor.

Stage 6: Return to Sport

Full game play or competition.



How long does this process take?

Each stage is a minimum of 24 hours, but could take longer, depending on how activities affect the way you feel. Since each concussion is unique, people will progress at different rates. For most people, symptoms improve within 1 to 4 weeks. If you have had a concussion before, you may take longer to heal the next time.

If symptoms are persistent (i.e., last longer than two weeks in adults or longer than four weeks in youth), your doctor should consider referring you to a healthcare professional who is an expert in the management of concussion.

How do I find the right doctor?

When dealing with concussions, it is important to see a doctor who is knowledgeable in concussion management. This might include your family doctor or a specialist like a sports medicine physician. Your family doctor may be required to submit a referral for you to see a specialist.

Contact the Canadian Academy of Sport and Exercise Medicine (CASEM) to find a sports medicine physician in your area. Visit www.casem-acmse.org for more information. You can also refer your doctor to parachutecanada.org/concussion for more information.

What if my symptoms return or get worse during this process?

If symptoms return or get worse, or new symptoms appear, return to the previous stage for at least 24 hours. Continue with activities that you can tolerate.

If symptoms return after medical clearance (Stages 5 and 6) you should be re-assessed by your doctor before resuming activities. Remember, symptoms may return later that day or the next, not necessarily during the activity!

Never return to sport until cleared by a doctor!

Returning to active play before full recovery from concussion puts you at higher risk of sustaining another concussion, with symptoms that may be more severe and last longer.

Additional Resources

Return-to-School Strategy

<http://horizon.parachutecanada.org/en/article/parachutes-return-to-learn-protocol>

Canadian Guideline on Concussion in Sport

<http://www.parachutecanada.org/guideline>

Concussion: Baseline Testing

<http://www.parachutecanada.org/downloads/injurytopics/BaselineTesting-FactSheet-Parachute.pdf>