

A step-by-step → recovery



1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5 → 6

School-age children - Teenagers - Adults - Seniors



You or a loved one has been diagnosed with a mild traumatic brain injury, also called concussion (MTBI/Concussion). *

This document offers advice to help you recover and gradually resume your activities.

 Common symptoms Here are some symptoms you may experience in the days following your MTBI/Concussion:	 Warning signs Go to an emergency room immediately if ANY of these symptoms occur:
Physical	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headache • Dizziness - Vertigo • Blurred vision • Sensitivity to light or noise • Nausea • Fatigue • Sleep disturbance (e.g. difficulty falling asleep) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe or worsening headache • Repeated vomiting • Double vision or loss of vision • Seizures (uncontrollable, repeated body movements) • Difficulty walking or talking • Weakness or loss of sensation in an arm or leg
Cognitive	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling slowed down • Difficulty staying focused or attentive • Difficulty understanding or remembering information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterioration in wakefulness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Difficulty staying awake (severe drowsiness) – Confusion – Loss of consciousness • Difficulty recognizing people or places
Emotional	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling more emotional than usual (e.g. anxiety, irritability, sadness, depressive symptoms) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasingly agitated or aggressive behaviour • Excessive crying • Unusual behaviour

Other symptoms?

It's normal to experience one or more symptoms. They may differ from one person to another. This list does not include all possible symptoms, only the most common ones.



*The content of this document does not replace medical advice and is not intended as an MTBI/Concussion diagnosis. If in doubt, consult a physician.

1

Active rest

Rest for 1 to 2 days after the event that caused your MTBI/Concussion.

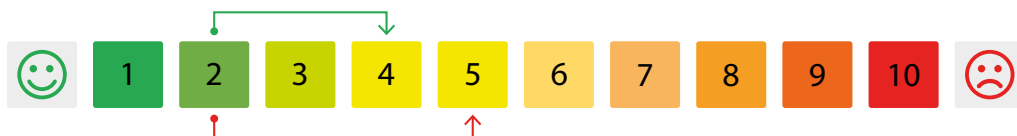
Resting does not mean doing nothing! Continue your activities but take it easy.

To do	To avoid
Intellectual activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Do simple activities that make you feel good. E.g. listen to soft music or audio books, do guided relaxation exercises, draw, look at picture books. ✔ Limit screen time as much as possible for the first 2 days. E.g. video games, social networks, cell phone, tablet, computer, television. ✔ Stay in touch with friends and family to avoid feeling lonely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✘ Avoid activities that require a lot of concentration, thought or memory. E.g. time-consuming work, going to school, work meetings. ✘ Avoid driving if you have severe symptoms. E.g. drowsiness, dizziness, headache, concentration or vision problems.
Physical activities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Take part in light physical activities that do not increase your symptoms. You should be able to talk without getting out of breath during these activities. Take breaks as needed. E.g. walking, cleaning, cooking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✘ Avoid physical activities that make you breathless or during which you could injure yourself. E.g. through contact, collision, falling.
Managing your symptoms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✔ Drink water to stay hydrated. ✔ Eat healthily and according to your appetite. ✔ Get enough sleep at night. ✔ Consult your pharmacist about over-the-counter medications you can take to relieve your symptoms and stick to the recommended doses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✘ Avoid alcohol, energy drinks and recreational drugs. ✘ Avoid prolonged isolation in darkness and silence. ✘ Avoid wearing sunglasses indoors and earplugs.

After your active rest

- Resume your activities step by step and at your own pace. 2 → 3 → 4 → 5 → 6
- You can get back into action mentally and physically at the same time.
- Gradually increase the intensity and duration of your intellectual and physical activities.
- Everyone evolves differently. Listen to your body.
- Do the activities you can tolerate, i.e. those that cause you few or no symptoms.

It's normal for your symptoms to increase slightly during or after activity (e.g. a headache that goes from 2 to 4 on a scale of 10), but they should diminish within 1 hour.



If your symptoms increase further (e.g. a headache that goes from 2 to 5 on a scale of 10), take a break. Wait until your symptoms return to the same intensity as before the activity. Then repeat the activity, but for a shorter time or less intensely.

Advice for resuming your intellectual activities

Move on to the next step when the activities are tolerated, i.e. they cause you few or no symptoms. If your symptoms disappear quickly, you can move on to the next step more sooner.

Partial resumption of activities (school, work, leisure)

- Return to school or work as soon as possible, even if you are still experiencing mild symptoms. E.g. start with half-days, then gradually increase the duration of your activity periods.
- Do activities that require a little more concentration, thought or memory. E.g. reading or homework.
- Gradually resume use of screens.

Complete resumption of activities WITH accommodations

- Resume more demanding activities. E.g. exams and work meetings.
- Use strategies to manage stress and anxiety. E.g. prepare in advance or plan the activity well so you know what to expect.

Examples of accommodations:

- Take more time to do your homework.
- Reduce your workload.
- Break up larger tasks into smaller ones.
- Take breaks in a quiet place.

Full resumption of activities WITHOUT accommodations



If your work duties involve risks to yourself or others (e.g. working at heights, lifting heavy loads), you may want to obtain authorization from a healthcare professional before returning to work (see p. 4).

They will be able to assess whether you are ready to return to work safely.

2

Advice for resuming your physical and sporting activities

Follow the steps that apply to you based on your usual physical activities.

Wait at least 24 hours between each step.

Light to moderate physical activity

- Do activities that make you slightly breathless. You should be able to talk. E.g. brisk walking, stationary biking, swimming, stretching.
- Avoid activities during which you could slip, fall or injure yourself.

Children can go to recess, but should avoid games during which they might fall or receive a blow to the head.

Exercises related to your usual physical activities (without risk of head injury)

- Start exercises that involve specific movements. E.g. throwing, dribbling, light jogging, individual physical education activities, lawn mowing, snow shoveling.

Go to step 4 only if:

- ✓ Your symptoms have disappeared during activities and at rest.
- ✓ You have completely resumed your intellectual activities (without accommodations).



If requested by your sports association, you should obtain authorization from a healthcare professional before starting step 4 (see p. 4).

Exercises with or without teammates (non-contact)

- Progress to exercises with no intensity limit, requiring greater concentration or coordination. E.g. tennis rallies, dance, drills, downhill skiing (light intensity), skating, climbing.

5

Complete return to non-competitive activities (contact permitted)

- Resume full training for your sport and all physical education activities involving a risk of collision, fall or contact. E.g. sledding, hockey, football.

6

Return to competition

- Return to competition when you have been able to complete a full training session (step 5) without experiencing any symptoms during the following 24 hours.



During steps 4 to 6, monitor your symptoms closely. If symptoms return during the activity, return to step 3. Wait until your symptoms have completely disappeared before resuming activities involving a risk of collision, fall or contact. Consult your healthcare professional if you are still having difficulty completing these steps.





Inform those around you

Give this document or any other note from your healthcare professional to the people around you (family, employer, school, educators or sports teams). They will be better able to support you in your recovery.

When should you consult a healthcare professional again?




Symptoms generally diminish after 2 weeks and disappear completely after 1 month in most people. A minority of people may experience prolonged symptoms.

Consult a healthcare professional if:

-  Your condition deteriorates or does not improve much after 2 weeks.
-  You have symptoms that prevent you from doing certain activities after 1 month.
-  You have difficulty completing the steps required to resume your activities, e.g. you are unable to take the next step after several attempts.
-  You are very worried about your symptoms.



To reach a healthcare professional who can help you

Early Intervention and Rehabilitation Team for MTBI/Concussion	<i>Section to be completed by the healthcare professional who assessed the patient.</i>   
Family doctor Sports doctor Or Specialized nurse practitioner	Contact your doctor or specialized nurse practitioner. If you do not have one: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make an appointment through the Primary Care Access Point (GAP) (online or by calling 811, option 3).• Go to a walk-in clinic.
Physiotherapist Psychologist Neuropsychologist Athletic therapist	A doctor or specialized nurse practitioner can refer you to these professionals. Contact your CLSC . } These professionals can also be consulted in private clinics without referral.

A healthcare professional can refer you to other professionals as needed, e.g. occupational therapist, nutritionist, optometrist, social worker.

Other useful resources



Other useful tools and references on MTBI/Concussion at inesss.qc.ca.



[Concussion toolbox](#) from the Association québécoise des médecins du sport at aqmse.org.



[Portail Clic Santé](#)
or portal3.clicsante.ca.

For more information on the resources available in your area, **call 811** (Info Santé line).