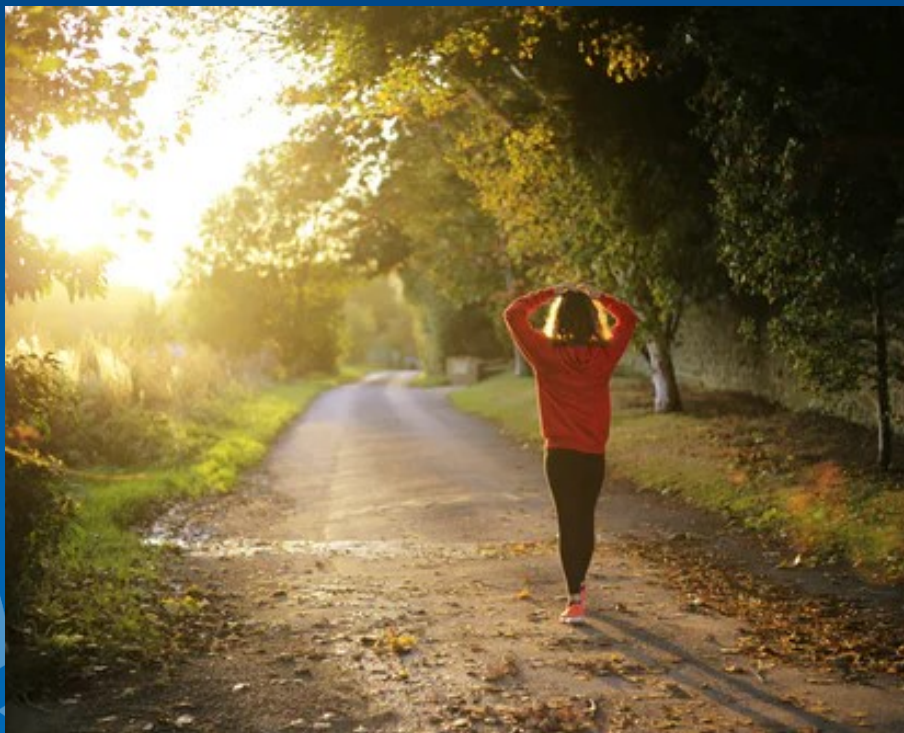


Recovery after a Mild Brain Injury

Illawarra Brain Injury Service



Health
Illawarra Shoalhaven
Local Health District

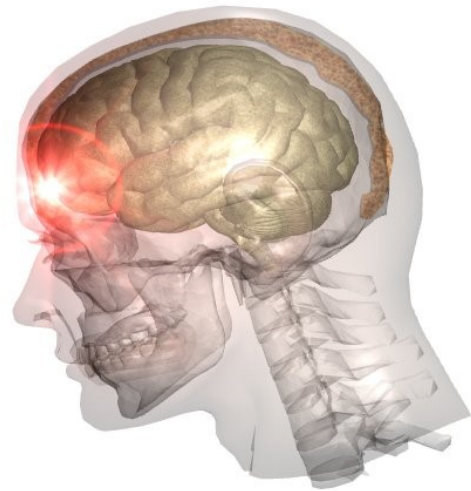
What is a concussion/mild traumatic brain injury?

A concussion, which is a mild traumatic brain injury, can occur with a 'hit to the head'. This might occur during sporting accidents, falls, car/bike accidents and assaults. Usually there is a loss of consciousness and a period of confusion and disorientation (amnesia). The length of this amnesia will indicate how severe the brain injury is.

Often with a concussion/mild traumatic brain injury, there are no lasting effects.

During a concussion the impact forces the brain to move side to side. This can lead to nerve damage, bruising, or skull fractures that take time to heal.

There are some common symptoms of a concussion/mild traumatic brain injury that you may experience.



The most common symptoms are:

- Increase in headaches
- Memory seems worse following the accident
- Fatigue more easily (physically or mentally)
- Disturbed sleep
- Feeling overwhelmed in noisy or crowded places
- More irritable with a "shorter fuse"
- Difficulty concentrating (can't stay focused on what you are doing)
- Dizziness
- Difficulty with word finding when talking
- Bright light upsets your eyes.

Recovery

Whilst recovering, things may be slightly difficult for a while. Whilst stressful, this is normal. During the recovery phase, your brain is healing so it is best to avoid activities (for example contact sports) that put you at risk of another injury.

Recovery is generally better if you initially rest for a couple of days. Your brain needs time to heal and recover. This is no different to giving yourself time to heal if you pulled a muscle, for example.

Ongoing rest until all symptoms have resolved is not recommended either. Recovery is optimised if you can pace yourself and after a few days gradually begin to return to daily activities. Some people with a concussion/ mild traumatic brain injury will find it hard to do their usual activities at first. Slowly increasing activities will allow your brain time to heal.

Activities can include:

- Light exercise (e.g. walking)
- Work or study
- Socialising.



Symptoms

Symptoms are a normal part of recovery and will reduce over time. If you find your symptoms get worse or you have new symptoms – this may be a sign you are pushing yourself too much. Ignoring your symptoms will risk making them worse.

Listen to your body, slow down, give your brain time to heal and then gradually increase your activity again. Like recovery from many injuries, recovery from a concussion / mild traumatic brain injury can be affected by pain, stress and fatigue. Treating pain, reducing stress and pacing yourself to reduce fatigue is sensible.

Summary

Approximately half the people who experience a concussion/mild traumatic brain injury have some symptoms afterwards. Most symptoms will resolve within 1 week to a month. Occasionally, symptoms can last three months or longer.

To maximise recovery after a concussion/ mild traumatic brain injury rest for a short period and then gradually return to normal activities. This will allow time for your brain to heal.

Your GP is a great person to contact:

- About when and how to return to school / work / contact sports
- If you have any concerns about your recovery or the impact of your injury.

If the symptoms have not resolved in 3 months please phone:

Illawarra Brain Injury Service

Tel: (02) 4223 8470



Need an interpreter? Professional interpreters are available if you need help to communicate in English, or if you are Deaf. Our staff can also ask for an interpreter. The staff will book an interpreter for you. Interpreter Services are free and confidential. You can bring a family member or friend with you to the appointment. If you need help to communicate it should be through a professional interpreter. You can also call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 if you need to speak to us before your appointment.