

Recovering from a Mild Traumatic Brain Injury or Concussion



You were seen today for a mild traumatic brain injury or concussion. Experiencing a mild traumatic brain injury or concussion might feel scary, but knowing what to do can help. With proper care, most people can return to work, school, and many other activities within a few days or weeks.

Experiencing mild traumatic brain injury and concussion symptoms is part of the normal healing process. Symptoms are different for each person and may change during recovery.

Some symptoms you may experience:



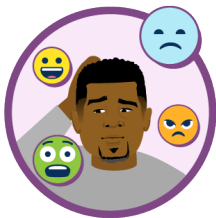
Physical

- Bothered by light or noise
- Dizziness or balance problems
- Feeling tired, no energy
- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting (early on)
- Vision problems



Thinking and Remembering

- Attention or concentration problems
- Feeling slowed down
- Feeling foggy or groggy
- Problems with memory
- Trouble thinking clearly



Emotional

- Anxiety or nervousness
- Irritability or easily angered
- Feeling more emotional
- Sadness



Sleep

- Sleeping less than usual
- Sleeping more than usual
- Trouble falling asleep



At any point of your recovery, watch for these danger signs and see a doctor right away if you experience them



- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Repeated vomiting for more than 30 minutes
- Unusual behavior, slurred speech, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up
- Neck pain or tenderness
- Weakness, numbness, burning, or tingling in arms or legs
- Convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching)
- Double vision

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1 What to Do Right Away

- ❌ **Don't return** to work, driving, sports, or other physical activities on the day of your injury.
- ✅ **Schedule a follow up** appointment with your regular doctor. If it is difficult to visit your doctor in person, ask about the availability of video or phone appointments. If you don't have a regular doctor, see the resources on page 3—many organizations can help.

2 Managing Your Recovery

- ✅ **Prioritize a good night's sleep and light activity** such as short walks. If an activity makes symptoms worse, be sure to stop and rest.
- ✅ **Minimize time using screens** or around bright **lights** and loud **noises**, if these activities make symptoms worse.
- ✅ As you start to feel better, do **aerobic exercise for 20-30 minutes** to help your recovery.
- ✅ **Stay connected** to friends, loved ones, and doctors, and ask for help when you need it.
- ✅ **Keep track of your symptoms** (on page 1) and communicate about them with your doctor.



Talk to Your Doctor If:

- You have existing medications, as some may cause complications with your recovery.
- You've fallen or feel unsteady.
- You need medication to help with headaches or other symptoms.
- Symptoms worsen significantly or won't go away.
- You feel sad or anxious or experience other mental health symptoms.

3 Returning to Driving, Work, and School

- ✅ Ask your doctor when it is safe for you to return to driving and **follow their guidance**.
- ✅ Ask your doctor for **written instructions** on when to return to work or school. Expect that some tasks may take longer at first.
- ✅ **Work with your employer or school** to ease back into a full workload or schedule, with support and breaks when necessary.
- ✅ Ask your employers or school about **support services** that may be available to you.



You May Need More Time Off If:

- You're having trouble thinking or concentrating.
- You are experiencing symptoms like dizziness, problems with vision, or reaction time.
- You work from heights where the risk of falling is high, such as on a ladder or a roof.
- You're required to drive or operate machinery or heavy equipment.
- You work with hazardous materials or other safety risks.
- Your work or school environment is high-stress.

4 Returning to Sports and Other Recreational Activities

- ✅ **Work closely with your doctor** to plan a gradual return to sports and other recreational activities.
- ✅ Returning to sports is a multi-step process that can take a week or more to complete.



Don't Rush It, and Remember:

A repeat brain injury that occurs before the brain has fully healed may slow your recovery or increase the chance for long-term problems. For more information about how to pace your recovery, go to www.cdc.gov/traumatic-brain-injury.

Where to Get Help

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



[Find a Health Center](https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/)

<https://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/>

These health centers include Tribal and Urban Indian Health Programs. They provide services regardless of a patient's ability to pay and charge for services on a sliding fee scale.

Brain Injury Association of America



[National Brain Injury Information](https://www.biausa.org/brain-injury)

<https://www.biausa.org/brain-injury>



[Find a Brain Injury Association in your state](https://www.biausa.org/find-bia)

<https://www.biausa.org/find-bia>



United States Brain Injury Alliance



[Find a Brain Injury Alliance in your state](https://usbia.org/about/)

<https://usbia.org/about/>

Indian Health Service, Tribal or Urban Indian Health Program



[Find a Health Center](https://www.ihs.gov/findhealthcare/)

<https://www.ihs.gov/findhealthcare/>

Military Health System's Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence



[Get patient and family resources](https://health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Centers-of-Excellence/Traumatic-Brain-Injury-Center-of-Excellence)

<https://health.mil/Military-Health-Topics/Centers-of-Excellence/Traumatic-Brain-Injury-Center-of-Excellence>

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators



[Get information on brain injury programs in your state](https://www.nashia.org/state-program-directory)

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Even though recovering from a mild traumatic brain injury or concussion can be difficult, you can expect to get better. For more information about how to pace your recovery, go to www.cdc.gov/traumatic-brain-injury.



Scan the QR code for more information.

The information provided in this handout or through links to other sites is not a substitute for medical or professional care. Questions about diagnosis and treatment for mild traumatic brain injury or concussion should be directed to your doctor or other healthcare provider.