

Recovery advice Whakaora Tohutohu for patients

CONCUSSION / MILD TRAUMATIC
BRAIN INJURY (MTBI)



**He Kaupare. He Manaaki.
He Whakaora.**
prevention.care.recovery.

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You have been diagnosed with a concussion.

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury.

Most of the time this is a short-lived injury. Please follow this advice to help speed up your recovery. You should book in to see your GP or other medical professional in 7-10 days to have a follow up appointment.

On page 5 you will find more information about your brain injury that you can read when you are ready. Please share this advice & information with family and friends so they can support your recovery.

WARNING SIGNS

If you experience any of these signs or if your symptoms get worse **please go to your nearest hospital immediately.**



Fainting
(passing out)



Seizure
(fit or convulsion)



Feeling extremely tired
or hard to wake up



Loss of balance
or clumsiness



A headache that gets
worse or is severe



Repeated Vomiting
(being sick)



Feeling confused
or agitated



Differences in your
vision (trouble seeing)



Slurred speech



Feeling weak
or numb

Using brain energy levels wisely

Because the brain needs to put some of its energy into recovering from injury, it has less energy available for other things.

Knowing how different activities affect your symptoms will mean you can then find out which daily activities drain your brain's energy tank, and which ones fill it back up.



EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES

- Break activities up into short blocks.
- Mix up activities that drain the brain with activities that help it recharge.
- Take a break before symptoms get more noticeable.
- Take a break as soon as symptoms are +2 points from when you started the activity.



GENTLE EXERCISE (Refer to specific RTS advice)

- Do some easy, low intensity physical activity (see examples from the list) at least once per day.
- Start to increase from 10-15 minutes up to 25-30 minutes, and increasing intensity (such as increasing inclination or speed) guided by symptoms.



LIMIT SCREEN USE

- Gradually increase screen use time and type (e.g. five minutes, 10 minutes). It can be easier for the brain to process information on screens by increasing the font size and reducing the brightness. Use one screen and do a single task at a time.



AVOID FURTHER INJURY

- You should avoid activities that put yourself at risk of a crash, collision, or contact. The effects of another brain injury can be much worse if you haven't fully recovered yet. If you have another injury, it is important to seek medical advice quickly.



RETURN TO WORK/SCHOOL (refer to specific return to learn/work advice)

- When you are ready to go back to work or study, you should do so gradually. Starting with quarter or half days.
- It's important to return to school or work fully before you return to sport (and more vigorous activity).



SLEEP

- You may still feel like you need to sleep more. If you need to take a daytime nap, it should be either late morning or early afternoon (for 20-30 minutes) so you don't affect your night-time sleep patterns.

How can I help my brain to recover?



After 24-48 hours

Setting yourself up for the best recovery

Just like an injured muscle, an injured brain needs the chance to rest, recover, and then rebuild its strength.

If you normally use glasses or a hearing aid, it's important to keep using them. This makes it easier for your brain to process visual and sound information.

Do some low impact exercise or activity such as walking (avoid hills) or using an exercise bike (at a slow pace) 1-2 times a day for 10-15 minutes.

Doing light everyday tasks e.g. self-care, household tasks, cleaning up and simple food preparation, can help with recovery. These types of activities can be done for short periods of time (e.g. 10-15 minutes) before taking a break.

It's important to avoid using screens as much as possible (e.g. TV, mobile or computer). This is hard work for an injured brain as there is a lot of visual and sound information to deal with quickly.

- Limit screen time to simple tasks e.g. texting & single emails for short periods of time.
- Short phone calls help you feel connected to others.
- Video games, social media scrolling and video conferencing (e.g. Facetime/Skype) should be avoided for the first 24-48 hours while the brain is recovering.



SLEEP

You may find you need to sleep more. This is a time when the brain can repair and restore itself. If taking a daytime nap, it is best to take one either late morning or early afternoon (for 20-30 minutes) so you don't affect your night-time sleep patterns.



WORK AND STUDY

You are likely to need a minimum of two days off work or school. Beyond that your healthcare provider will provide appropriate guidance.



DRIVING

You should not drive for at least 48 hours after a concussion.

You should not return to driving until any symptoms of dizziness have gone away, your concentration is good and sustained, you can react quickly to unexpected hazards, and your ability to judge distances is normal.



ALCOHOL AND RECREATIONAL DRUGS

You should avoid alcohol, caffeine/energy drinks, and other recreational drugs until your symptoms are better. The brain can't deal with these substances as well when it is injured. They can make your symptoms worse and slow down recovery.



AIR TRAVEL

If possible, you should avoid air travel for the next 24-48 hours.



PAIN RELIEF

Use paracetamol or Panadol for headaches. Anti-Inflammatory pain relief such as ibuprofen, Naproxen, Voltaren (Diclofenac) or Nurofen (NSAIDs) may be used 48 hours after injury as advised by your healthcare practitioner for muscle pain or headaches.

How can I help my brain to recover?



After 24-48 hours

Rebuilding your brain's energy and strength

Start to monitor how different activities affect you

Research has shown that people who do too much too soon AND those who do too little are slower to recover.

To find out how different activities affect you, keep a note of how much you are experiencing symptoms on a scale between 0 and 10.

Start doing mental and physical activities for short periods of time (e.g. 10-15 minutes). Then gradually increase the time and intensity. Use your symptom scores as a guide.

If an activity causes an increase of your symptoms of three points, you have done too much. You should stop the activity for now and when you try again, go back a step (e.g. finish 10 minutes sooner).

When the increase is less than three points you can start to gradually increase the amount of time you spend doing that activity.

Rest and reducing activities help the brain to recover. Don't try to do too much too fast and take regular breaks.



Physical activity ideas

LOW INTENSITY



Walking



Jogging



Easy cycling on stationary bike



Easy swimming



Aqua jogging

HIGH INTENSITY



RPM/Spin class



Heavy weight lifting



Sprinting



Swimming intervals



HIIT classes

Brain activity ideas

RECHARGING ACTIVITIES



Napping



Sleep



Meditation



Breathing techniques



Baking



Listening to calm music/podcasts

DRAINING ACTIVITIES



Video games



Social media scrolling



Computer use



Reading - books/magazines



Puzzles



Working/studying

* Note: These are examples and everyone will respond differently. Find what works for you. The suggested draining activities are known to be hard on the injured brain, and these should not be used for recharging.