

Persistent Post-Concussion Symptoms

Concussion, also known as mild traumatic brain injury, is a **type of head injury** that can result from a forceful impact to the head, neck, or body, which causes the brain to move within the skull. **Concussion can result in a range of signs and symptoms.** These can cause a person to feel physically unwell and/or experience changes in their thinking, mood, and sleeping patterns.

Persisting Symptoms

Most people make a full recovery after having a concussion. Children, adolescents, and adults typically recover from concussion signs and symptoms within 4 weeks of their injury.

However, some people continue to experience ongoing concussion signs and symptoms longer than this timeframe. This is called

Persistent Post-Concussion Symptoms (PPCS). It may also be referred to as post concussion syndrome or persisting symptoms.

Sometimes people do not realise that they are experiencing PPCS until they return to normal daily activities, such as work, study, or sport.

A graded return to activity can help manage concussion

signs and symptoms, and aid the recovery process. This includes returning to activities for a short period of time and stopping if symptoms return or worsen.

Everyone's concussion recovery is unique to them. The time it takes to recover from a concussion can differ from person to person, even if they have had a concussion before.

Consider the following to help yourself get better

Activity	Suggestion
Sleeping	Talk to your doctor if you notice changes to your normal sleeping patterns that do not go away.
Driving	Do not drive or operate machinery until you feel better and are able to concentrate. Talk to your doctor for advice.
Alcohol/ drugs	Do not drink alcohol or use recreational drugs until you have fully recovered. These can make your symptoms worse. Talk to your doctor about other medications that you may be taking.
Work/study	You may need to take time off work or study until your concentration improves. How much time you need to take from work or study will depend on the type of activity. See your doctor and let your employer or teacher know if your symptoms are causing you problems with work or study. You may need to return to work and/or study gradually.
Sports/ lifestyle	Return to sport and recreational activities should be a step-by-step process. The goal of a graded return is to slightly increase physical activity as you progress through each stage. This should occur without triggering symptoms or making them worse. If symptoms do worsen, return to the previous stage in recovery. You may need to do this more than once over the course of your recovery process.
Relationships	Sometimes your symptoms may affect your relationships with family and friends. You may experience irritability and/or mood swings. See your doctor if you or your family are concerned.

See your doctor if you are experiencing ongoing symptoms. They will assess your symptoms and may refer you to one of a range of healthcare specialists for further support. Regular check-ups with your GP or other healthcare professionals can help to monitor your concussion recovery progress.

Healthcare professionals who may assist recovery

A range of healthcare professionals may be able to assist your recovery from PPCS. Which healthcare professional you see will depend on the symptoms you are experiencing. Some healthcare professionals will require you to get a referral from your GP/doctor first, while others can be contacted directly.

Examples of healthcare professionals who may be helpful post-concussion

Symptoms	Healthcare Professional
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immediate medical care following concussion injury• Management of persistent post-concussion symptoms• Referrals to medical specialists and allied health professionals	General Practitioner (GP) <p>GPs are doctors qualified in general medical practice. They are the first point of contact for seeking medical care and treat a wide range of medical conditions. GPs can also refer patients to hospitals and other medical services for urgent and specialist treatment. A GP may be seen for treatment of concussion symptoms immediately after a concussion injury has occurred and can help with the management of persistent symptoms by referring to other specialists. Regular follow-up appointments with GPs are useful for monitoring concussion recovery.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headache• Dizziness• Neck pain or stiffness• Balance problems	Physiotherapist <p>Physiotherapists treat injuries and help manage health conditions that affect a person's ability to move. There are different types of physiotherapists.</p> Following a concussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a musculoskeletal physiotherapist may help treat a sore or stiff neck, headaches, and other pain or mobility issues• a vestibular physiotherapist may help treat or manage dizziness, balance problems, vertigo, and/or visual disturbance (e.g. gaze instability).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulties with activities of daily living	Occupational Therapist <p>Occupational Therapists (OTs) specialise in rehabilitation. OTs work closely with individuals, and at times their families, to identify how a person's injury or illness affects their daily life and recommend practical solutions. Following concussion, an OT may be seen to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• identify and teach memory strategies (e.g. checklists) to assist with changes in physical, memory, and other thinking skills; and• recommend ways to adapt home and other environments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depression• Anxiety• Irritability• Relationship problems	Clinical Psychologist <p>Clinical Psychologists are trained in the assessment, diagnosis, and management of mental illnesses and psychological (behavioural) disorders.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulties with memory and concentration	Neuropsychologist <p>Neuropsychologists are psychologists that specialise in the assessment and treatment of behavioural, emotional, and cognitive issues and difficulties.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insomnia• Tiredness or fatigue• Trouble staying asleep	Sleep Specialist <p>Sleep Specialists specialise in the diagnosis and treatment of sleep related issues that may be experienced following concussion. Sleep specialists may be medical doctors, psychologists, or scientists that have completed specialised training.</p>

To learn more about these and other healthcare professionals and how they can assist your recovery from PPCS, visit the Connectivity website: www.connectivity.org.au

More information

Connectivity Traumatic Brain Injury Australia is an Australia-wide not-for-profit organisation working to raise awareness of concussion and traumatic brain injury in the community. For more information on PPCS, you can speak to your doctor, healthcare professional, or visit the Connectivity website at www.connectivity.org.au

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DISCLAIMER: This flyer and the Connectivity website does not offer individual medical advice. If you have suffered a concussion seek medical advice.