

Persisting 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.

Most people make a full recovery within 4 weeks of sustaining a concussion. However, some continue to experience ongoing symptoms longer than this timeframe. This is called Persisting Post-Concussion Symptoms (PPCS). It may also be referred to as post-concussion syndrome (PCS) and 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 symptoms and aid the recovery process. This includes returning to activities for a short period of time and stopping if symptoms return or get worse.

Common symptoms may include:

- Persistent headaches
- Difficulties concentrating
- Sensitivity to light/nois
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Fatigue
- Balance and coordination issues

If you are experiencing these symptoms you are not alone, and there are things that can help.

Things that can help you recover:

- Talk to your doctor if you notice changes to your normal sleeping patterns that do not go away.
- Do not drive or operate machinery until you feel better and are able to concentrate. 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

When to seek further help

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.

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 PPCS 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 following concussion include:

- **General Practitioner (GP)** – provides immediate medical care and management of persisting post-concussion symptoms
- **Physiotherapists** – physios with a range of specialities can help with headaches, dizziness and balance problems
- **Occupational therapists** – can assist with activities of daily living
- **Clinical Psychologists** – can help with depression, anxiety and relationship issues
- **Neuropsychologists** – can aid in memory and concentration
- **Sleep specialists** – diagnose and manage insomnia, trouble staying asleep and fatigue
- **Neurologists** – can help to manage persistent headaches and neurological symptoms

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/living-with-tbi/tbi-rehab-support-team

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



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