



Head injury, concussion and return to activity and sport – adults

You have been reviewed and we feel it is safe for you to leave hospital now following your head injury. While we feel you are safe to be discharged, there are some things to think about in terms of your daily activities – in particular your return to sport.

Important advice

It can be normal after a head injury (concussion) to experience some mild symptoms for up to two weeks. These include a mild headache, feeling sick (without vomiting), dizziness, irritability or bad temper, problems concentrating or problems with your memory, tiredness, lack of appetite or problems sleeping. These should be managed with simple painkillers such as paracetamol and/or ibuprofen, drinking plenty of fluids, avoiding caffeine and alcohol, and rest, both physical and mental (brain rest). If these symptoms persist for more than four weeks, please seek medical attention.

Please refer to the separate [head injury advice leaflet](#) for further information regarding general recovery and when to seek medical advice.

Returning to sport and normal activities following a concussion

You should not return to sport until you feel you have fully recovered.

Following a concussion, it is important to follow a step wise process to ensure you are able to fully recover. If at any stage you experience ongoing symptoms, you should return to the previous stage until you are symptom free. Each stage should be a minimum of 24 hours and you cannot progress until all symptoms have gone.

Time starts on the day **after** the injury.

Please see below for our recommended return to sport stages.

Stage	Aims	Examples
1a – Rest Complete physical and brain rest Minimum 48 hours	Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No driving, no exercise, minimise screen time / television / reading / video games• Consider time off work or education• No caffeine / alcohol / non-prescription drugs

2a – Relative rest	Return to normal activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only activities that do not provoke any symptoms • No sport until symptom free • Consider time off work or education if causing symptoms
2b – Symptoms gone	Increase heart rate and full return to learning / work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light jogging, swimming or stationary bike at low intensity, short duration (up to 20 minutes)
3 – Sports specific exercise	Add in movement	Running drills (if applicable)
4 – Non-contact drills	Co-ordination and movement drills Non-contact	More complex drills including passing, progressive return to resistance training
5 – Full practice	Return to normal training activities	Contact drills (if applicable)
6 – Return to sport	Full recovery	Normal game play/sporting activities

If in doubt, SIT IT OUT!

Other useful advice

If you were wearing any protective head gear (e.g. a riding helmet), we advise you to replace this even if there is no visible damage to the equipment.

References:

[Graduated return to play World Rugby](#)

Keepyourbootson.co.uk

[British Equestrian concussion guidelines](#)

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Emergency Department, June 2024.

Next review due: June 2026