



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

Your child has been reviewed and assessed as safe to leave the hospital following a head injury. While we feel they are safe to be discharged, there are some things to think about in terms of your child’s daily activities – in particular their 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 alcohol and caffeine drinks, 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

Your child should not return to sport until they have fully recovered. This means they are completely symptom free and feel back to their pre-injury self.

Following a concussion, it is important to follow a step wise process to ensure a full and timely recovery. If at any stage your child experiences ongoing symptoms, they should return to the previous stage until they are symptom free. Each stage should be a minimum of 24 hours and they should not progress to the next stage until all symptoms have resolved. 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 exercise, minimise screen time / television / reading / video games• Consider time off 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 education if causing symptoms
2b – Symptoms gone	Increase heart rate and full return to education	<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
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!

Specific sports “time out” duration advice

Some grass roots sporting organisations will have a minimum “time out” of sport following head injury / confirmation of concussion. These are summarised below and full documents can be found in the references section:

- **Sport England:** 21 days away from matches or training where there is a risk of contact injury
- **The FA:** Minimum 12 days away from full contact. Return to matches only when symptom free
- **The BEA:** 21 days before returning to normal riding duties. Ground-work with protective head wear ONLY after 7 days

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](#)

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RBFT Emergency Department, June 2024. Next review due: June 2026

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