

After a concussion:

RETURN-TO-SCHOOL STRATEGY



Parachute
Concussion Series

Students do not need to be symptom-free to return to school.

It is common and OK for a student's symptoms to worsen mildly and briefly* with activity as they move through the return-to-school steps. But, if their symptoms worsen more than this, they should pause and adapt activities.

This tool is a guide and should not replace medical advice.

*Symptom worsening should not last more than one hour.

Step 1: Activities of daily living and relative rest at home (first 24-48 hours)

Examples of activities at this step:

- Light walking
- Preparing meals
- Social interactions (e.g., talking with friends)
- Short board games, drawing, crafts

Minimize screen time (e.g., phone, TV, computer)

Ready for the next step? After a maximum 24 to 48 hours after injury, go to step 2

Step 2: School activities with encouragement to return to school (as tolerated)

Examples of activities at this step:

- Reading or other light cognitive activities
- Social interactions
- Screen time as tolerated

The student can begin returning to the school environment as tolerated.

Ready for the next step? If the student can tolerate school activities, progress to step 3.



Step 3: Part-time or full days at school with accommodations

- Gradually reintroduce schoolwork
- The student may need to begin with partial school days
- The student may need accommodations to their workload and/or to the school environment (e.g., access to breaks, extra time to complete work, dim lighting)

Ready for the next step? If the student can tolerate full days without accommodations for concussion, progress to step 4.

Step 4: Return to school full-time

Return to full days at school and academic activities, without accommodations related to the concussion.

For return to sport and physical activity, including physical education class, refer to the Return-to-Sport Strategy.

How long does this process take?

A student with a concussion may miss one or more days of school. Generally, more than one week of complete absence from the school environment is not recommended. Since each concussion is unique, people will progress at different rates.

The signs and symptoms of a concussion usually last for up to four weeks, but may last longer. If you have had a concussion before, you may take longer to heal the next time. If your symptoms are not improving or last longer than four weeks, you should be referred to a healthcare professional who is an expert in the management of concussion.

You should not rush through your return to activities. At the same time, if you can tolerate being at school, you should not be restricted from attending.

What if my symptoms return or get worse during this process?

It is common for symptoms to worsen mildly and briefly as you return to activities. If your

symptoms feel a little worse for up to one hour, this is OK. But if they feel worse for longer than that, or if they feel much worse, take a break and adapt activities.

You may need accommodations to help you tolerate your workload and the school environment. Examples include access to breaks, extra time to complete work, permission to wear sunglasses in class or a quiet place to eat lunch.

If you receive medical clearance from a doctor, symptoms should not return afterward. If your symptoms come back, you should be re-assessed.

Never return to activities with risk of contact until cleared by a doctor!

Additional resources

Scan the QR code or visit parachute.ca/concussion

