

Concussion Recovery.

A concussion affects a person's ability to think and move. To ensure a full recovery and get safely back to school, work and sport it's important to follow best practice. This means following the Graduated Return to Learn/Work protocol, and completing the Graduated Return to Play if returning to sport.

Graduated Return to Learn/Work (GRTL/W)

You may need to miss a few days of school/work. You must be completely back to school/work before you return to sport. Start gradually, if something makes your symptoms worse, stop that activity and rest until you feel better.

Stage	Activity at Each Step	Goals of Each Stage
1 Things that do not give you symptoms	Things you would normally do (e.g. reading, texting, screen time) as long as they do not increase symptoms (e.g. headaches, dizziness, fatigue). Start with 5-15 min at a time and gradually build up	No symptoms with things that you would do at home
2 School / work activities at home	Reading, checking emails, homework or other thinking tasks	No symptoms with school or work tasks completed at home
3 Return to school/work part-time	Gradually return to school/work. May need to start with a half day at school/work or take breaks during the day	Return gradually, guided by symptoms. Start part-time and take breaks when needed
4 Return to school / work full-time	Gradually return to school/work until a full day can be tolerated, may need to take breaks during the day to rest your brain	Return to school/work full-time guided by symptoms

If you continue to have symptoms with mental activity, stop the activity until symptoms ease, or consider doing the following:

- Start school/work later, only going for half days, or going only to certain classes.
- Allow extra time to finish projects/tasks.
- Work in a quiet room and avoid noisy areas.
- Take regular breaks during the day.
- Avoid doing more than one exam per day.
- Complete repetition/memory cue exercises.
- Use a student helper/tutor.

Graduated Return to Play (GRTP)

New Zealand Rugby's GRTP protocol is a good guide to follow for all sports-related concussions. The mandatory stand-down period is 23 days for people under 19, and 21 days for people 19 and over. This is because children and adolescents often take longer to recover.

Remember these timeframes are a minimum. You may need to spend longer in each stage depending on how you feel. If at any stage you feel worse, you need to return to the previous stage until you feel better.

Stage	What to Do	Goals	Timeframes	
			Under 19	19 +
1 Rest / No activity	Mental and physical rest	Avoid physical activity, thinking tasks and screens	Days 1-2	Days 1-2
2 Light to moderate exercise	Symptom-guided activities such as walking, jogging or stationary cycling	Increase heart rate	Days 3-16	Days 3-16
3 Moderate to high exercise	Running drills, no impact activities	Increased heart rate and movement	Days 17-18	Day 17
4 Non-contact training drills	Progression to more complex training drills: passing, catching, weight training	Exercise, coordination and thinking components	Days 19-20	Day 18
Obtain medical clearance from a doctor				
5 Full contact practice	May participate in normal training activities (contact training)	Restore confidence and assess function skills by coaching staff	Days 21-22	Days 19-20
6 After 24 hrs return to play	Player rehabilitated	Recover and return to play	Day 23	Day 21

In some cases, symptoms may be prolonged or a gradual return to activity may not be tolerated. If recovery is lengthy, a concussion specialist or clinic can help with rehabilitation. If you are under 19 and still having symptoms after 4 weeks or over 19 and still having symptoms after 2 weeks you need to go back to your doctor.