



CRASH CARE CLINICS

Concussion Recovery Guide

A concussion is a mild brain injury that temporarily affects how your brain works. Even though the symptoms can feel strange or uncomfortable, they are usually temporary, and most people make a full recovery. You do not need to lose consciousness or have abnormal imaging for it to be a “real” concussion — most concussions have normal CT or MRI scans.

What You May Feel

After a concussion, it’s normal to notice a mix of symptoms. They may appear right away or develop over the next day or two. Common symptoms include headaches, feeling “foggy,” dizziness, nausea, trouble concentrating, sensitivity to light or noise, and fatigue. Some people also feel more emotional or have changes in sleep.

These experiences can be frustrating, but they are expected. Most adults begin improving within **1–2 weeks**, and many feel mostly back to normal by **2–4 weeks**. A smaller number take longer, which simply means the brain needs more guided support — not that the injury is permanent.

Serious Warning Signs

Most concussions recover normally. However, if you notice any of the following, go to the ER or call 911:

- Worsening or severe headache
- Repeated vomiting
- Increasing confusion or agitation
- Trouble speaking or walking
- Significant bodily weakness

- Seizure
- One pupil larger than the other
- A sudden major worsening of symptoms

These are rare, but important to watch for.

The First 48 Hours

In the first one to two days, your brain needs a quieter environment to stabilize. This doesn't mean staying in a dark room all day, but it does mean easing back from anything that strains you.

Helpful early steps include:

- Spending time in a calm, quiet space
- Taking breaks when symptoms increase
- Light, simple activities around the house
- Staying hydrated and eating normally

Try to avoid heavy exercise, long stretches of screen time, loud environments, and alcohol. If something makes symptoms noticeably worse, give yourself space to rest.

Getting Back Into Activity

After the first couple of days, gentle movement actually helps your brain recover. Short walks, light activities at home, and brief periods of reading or screen use are usually safe to try, as long as symptoms stay mild.

A simple rule of thumb:

**If symptoms go up a little but come back down quickly, it's okay.
If symptoms spike and stay worse, slow down.**

Gradually increase how long and how intensely you do things. Most people improve steadily when they pace themselves rather than push too hard.

Returning to Work or School

A gradual return works best. Many people start with lighter tasks or shorter days, then build up as their brain tolerates more.

A typical progression might look like:

- Short periods of mental activity at home
- Partial days or modified duties
- Full days with breaks
- Normal routine when symptoms stay mild

If concentration, screen time, or busy environments worsen symptoms, temporary adjustments can help. Talk to your provider about helping you coordinate those adjustments.

Sleep and Recovery

Sleep is one of the most powerful tools for healing after a concussion. Try to keep a consistent sleep schedule, limit screens before bed, and unwind with calming activities. Improving sleep often helps headaches, mood, and energy.

If sleep trouble continues beyond a week or two, let your provider know — sleep issues after concussion are common and treatable.

Headache and Neck Pain

Headaches are extremely common. Tylenol is generally safe early on, but avoid using pain medication every day for long periods, as this can cause rebound headaches. Many post-concussion headaches are partly related to neck strain, especially after car accidents or falls. In those cases:

- Gentle stretching
- Heat
- Massage
- Physical therapy

can make a big difference.

Nutrition and Hydration

Your brain heals best when your body is supported. Drink plenty of water, eat balanced meals, and focus on foods rich in nutrients. Keeping caffeine, sugar, and alcohol moderate helps recovery.

Some supplements may be helpful but are optional. Talk with your provider if you're considering:

- **Omega-3s** (fish oil)
- **B-vitamins** (especially B2)
- **Magnesium**
- **Vitamin D**

These support the brain's energy systems and overall nervous system health.

Rehab and Targeted Therapies

If symptoms last beyond the first couple of weeks, more specific therapies can speed recovery. The right approach depends on your symptoms:

- **Vestibular therapy** for dizziness or motion sensitivity
- **Vision or eye-tracking therapy** for focusing problems or eye strain

- **Neck therapy** for headaches that start in the neck
- **Guided aerobic exercise** for ongoing brain fog, headaches, or fatigue
- **Cognitive or memory strategies** if mental clarity is slow to return

Many people feel significantly better once the right therapy is matched to the right symptom.

Mood, Stress, and Emotions

Feeling more emotional, irritable, or anxious is common. Your brain is healing, your routine has changed, and your nervous system is more sensitive — that's a normal part of concussion recovery.

Helpful tools include:

- Light daily movement
- Breathing or relaxation exercises
- Meditation
- Staying connected with supportive people

If feelings of anxiety or sadness start to take over, talk with your provider. Counseling or short-term therapy can be extremely helpful during concussion recovery.

If Symptoms Last Longer Than Expected

Symptoms that last more than **4–6 weeks** are called persistent post-concussion symptoms. This does not mean permanent damage. It usually means your brain needs a more customized, structured recovery plan. With the right combination of therapies, most people continue to improve and return to full function.

Final Thoughts

A concussion can feel overwhelming, but it is highly treatable. With early rest, gradual activity, good sleep, smart pacing, and targeted therapies when needed, your brain has an excellent ability to heal. Stay patient with yourself, and check in with your provider if symptoms aren't improving or start to worry you. You are not alone in this — recovery is very achievable with the right plan.