



RETURN TO WORK After Concussion



- This tool is to help guide the return to work after a concussion, but does not replace medical advice from a health care professional.
- Consult with your company/union guidelines for any role specific details on each stage (if applicable).
- Each stage lasts at least 24 hours and recovery timelines will vary for each injury. Only move to the next stage when activities can be completed without aggravating symptoms. Do not try to rush the recovery.
- If symptoms return or worsen after moving to a new stage, return to the previous stage.
- When introducing new activities, always begin in 5-15 minute intervals with plenty of breaks. Gradually increase the intervals to up to 30-60 minutes as symptoms allow. Do not increase the interval until symptoms are not provoked by the activity.
- If symptoms do not improve within 48 hours after the initial injury, or if symptoms continue to get worse during the recovery, seek medical help immediately.

STAGE
1

Rest and activities
of daily life



During the first 24-48 hours after the injury, create a quiet and calm environment to rest physically and cognitively. Sleep as much as needed - be checked on but not woken up. Minimize screen time during this stage. Avoid caffeine, reading, sports, work, driving, and emotional situations, and keep social visits brief.

Recommended activities:

- Sleep/rest as much as needed
- Light walking/yoga
- Household cleaning/chores
- Preparing meals
- Brief phone calls
- Board/card games
- Other activities that don't require physical or mental exertion

MOVE TO
NEXT
STAGE

When symptoms begin to improve
slightly OR after 48 hours

STAGE
3

Accommodated return to
work, part-time or full-time



Begin work activities according to your return to work plan and accommodations. Carefully monitor symptoms and gradually increase your work hours as your symptoms allow. Once you've reached full-time hours, begin gradually phasing out accommodations.

Recommended activities:

- Slowly phase out accommodations in test periods to see if symptoms are aggravated. Remove one accommodation at a time and reintroduce the accommodation if symptoms worsen.
- **Acquire medical clearance for dangerous/high-risk tasks such as operating heavy machinery, working at heights, long distance driving, etc. (if applicable)**
- **Communicate progress with your workplace**

MOVE TO
NEXT
STAGE

No new/worsening symptoms for 24 hours
after working a full regular work day

STAGE
2

Cognitive /
work activities



Begin trying cognitive activities such as reading, word puzzles, or work-like tasks and increase social/public interaction by running errands, commuting, social visits, etc.. Take plenty of breaks and use accommodations where needed (e.g. noise cancelling headphones or sunglasses). Screens can be used as symptoms allow.

Recommended activities:

- Gradually increased screen use, as symptoms allow
- Light reading
- Work-like tasks
- Sudoku/word puzzles
- Increased social contact
- **Contact your workplace to develop your return to work plan, considering factors such as hours/days worked and light/noise accommodations**

MOVE TO
NEXT
STAGE

No new/worsening symptoms for 24 hours
after 60 minutes of cognitive activity

STAGE
4

Full-time return
to work



Return to full participation at work without concussion-related accommodations.

Monitor symptoms over the next few weeks and reintroduce accommodations as needed. Do not rush your recovery or ignore symptoms.

For more resources
and information:

[BrainInjuryNS.com/
Concussion](https://BrainInjuryNS.com/Concussion)

