



# 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 0** | Rest 

Create a quiet and calm environment to rest physically and cognitively. Sleep as much as needed - be checked on but not woken up. Avoid caffeine, computers, cell phones, TV, reading, physical activity/sports, work, driving, and emotional situations, and keep social visits brief.

**Recommended activities:**

- Brief phone calls
- Board/card games
- Drawing/colouring
- Other activities that don't require physical or mental exertion

**MOVE TO NEXT STAGE** | When symptoms begin to improve OR after 48 hours of resting

**STAGE 3** | Reduced hours, accommodated work 

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.

**Recommended activities:**

- Communicate and use accommodations as needed, such as a quiet environment, breaks, reduced hours, more time to complete tasks, etc.
- Communicate progress with workplace

**MOVE TO NEXT STAGE** | No new/worsening symptoms for 24 hours after working 75%+ of a regular work day

**STAGE 1** | Light physical & mental activities 

Begin trying light physical and mental activities at home while carefully monitoring symptoms, and start a consistent sleep schedule. Continue avoiding caffeine, work, physical exertion, and emotional situations, and keep social visits brief.

**Recommended activities:**

- Limited computer, cell phone, & T.V. use if symptoms allow
- Light reading
- Walking/yoga
- Household cleaning/chores

**MOVE TO NEXT STAGE** | No new/worsening symptoms for 24 hours after 30-60 minutes of light activity

**STAGE 4** | Regular hours, accommodated work 

Increase work hours to regular/full-time hours while carefully monitoring symptoms. Begin slowly experimenting with removing accommodations as your symptoms allow.

**Recommended activities:**

- Accommodations should be slowly phased out in test periods to see if symptoms are aggravated or not
- Acquire medical clearance for dangerous/high-risk tasks such as operating heavy machinery, working at heights, driving long distances, etc. (if applicable)

**MOVE TO NEXT STAGE** | No new/worsening symptoms for 24 hours after working a full regular work day

**STAGE 2** | Moderate physical & mental activities 

Begin increasing physical and mental activities to a moderate level as symptoms allow. Limited caffeine use is now acceptable. Increase social/public interaction by running errands, commuting, social visits, etc.

**Recommended activities:**

- Jogging/cycling
- Sudoku/word puzzles
- Increased peer contact
- Contact your workplace to discuss your return to work plan (workload, hours, etc.) and any accommodations (low light/noise, wearing sunglasses or noise cancelling headphones, etc.)

**MOVE TO NEXT STAGE** | No new/worsening symptoms for 24 hours after 30-60 minutes of moderate activity

**STAGE 5** | Slowly remove accommodations 

Begin slowly removing accommodations while carefully monitoring symptoms. Remove one accommodation at a time and reintroduce the accommodation if symptoms worsen.

**Recommended activities:**

- Communicate progress towards your full return to work with your workplace
- Continue to monitor symptoms over the next few weeks and reintroduce accommodations as needed. Do not rush your recovery or ignore symptoms

**MOVE TO STAGE 6: Return to Work** | No new/worsening symptoms for 24 hours after a regular work day with no accommodations