



# RETURN TO SCHOOL After Concussion



- Minimize time away from the school environment; return to school shouldn't be restricted if symptoms allow for full-time attendance sooner than this guide progresses. Students should return to school part-time as soon as symptoms allow (within seven days).
- This tool is to help guide the return to school after a concussion, but does not replace medical advice from a health care professional.
- 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, school work, sports, work, driving, and emotional situations, and keep social visits brief.

- Recommended activities:**
- Sleeping/rest as much as needed
  - Light walking
  - Household cleaning/chores
  - Preparing meals
  - Activities that don't require physical or mental exertion
  - **Contact school to develop a return-to-school plan**

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

**STAGE 3** | Accommodated return to school, part-time or full-time

Depending on symptoms, students should return part-time or full-time and use accommodations as needed. Avoid music classes, P.E. and physical activity at lunch/recess, assemblies, field trips, extracurricular activities, homework, tests, and carrying heavy loads such as a backpack.

- Recommended activities:**
- Accommodations (as needed): breaks during class, dimmed lights, low-noise environment, extra time to complete work, reduced workload, etc.
  - Increase time spent in the school environment until attending full-time, and then begin slowly reducing accommodations, as symptoms allow
  - **Communicate progress with school**

**MOVE TO NEXT STAGE** | When full-time attendance without concussion accommodations is tolerable

**STAGE 2** | School/cognitive activities, as symptoms allow

Begin trying light cognitive activities such as reading or homework and increase peer contact while carefully monitoring symptoms. Take plenty of breaks and use accommodations where needed (e.g. noise cancelling headphones, sunglasses, etc.). Screens can be used as symptoms allow. Students should be encouraged to return to school part-time as soon as symptoms allow.

- Recommended activities:**
- Limited screen use, as symptoms allow
  - Light reading
  - Homework/school activities
  - LEGO/board or card games
  - Increased peer contact
  - **Communicate progress with school**

**MOVE TO NEXT STAGE** | When student can tolerate completing school activities

**STAGE 4** | Full-time return to school

Return to full participation at school in academic activities without concussion-related accommodations. You do NOT need medical clearance to return to school. For returning to physical activity, P.E., or sports, refer to our Return to Sport guidelines.

**For more resources and information:**

**BrainInjuryNS.com/  
Concussion**