



Return to study fact sheet:

After a concussion, students need to gradually return to their daily life. As an educator it is preferable to support a graduated (step-by-step) return to school.

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that can result in symptoms that affect return to usual daily activities as well as when returning to the increasing demands of school.

The following are common concussion symptoms:

- **Poor sleep and fatigue**
- **Headaches**
- **Dizziness**
- **Difficulty with attention and memory**
- **Reduced balance and coordination**
- **Visual changes**
- **Noise/light sensitivity**

Some symptoms may not be obvious or visible to an observer. The first indication to the educator, may be an inability to remain on task in class or behavioural changes eg such as irritability, quick to anger.

Individuals can suffer other injuries alongside a concussion due to the nature of the fall or hit that caused the concussion, which can complicate the recovery. A good example of this may be a whiplash.

Students should return to school when the majority of symptoms have diminished and physical and mental endurance can be maintained over the day (with regular refresh breaks).

A general guide for return to school is when the student can concentrate/physically engage with activities at home for about 2 hours and/or on a computer screen for 45 minutes. This can include homework or keeping up with missed work.

Students should be medically cleared by a doctor before returning to school.

It is important that open communication is maintained with the student, their family and treating medical team to support a graded return to school plan (GRTSP). For year 11/12 ATAR students, you may need to consider negotiating with the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) and/or Tertiary Institutions Service Centre (TISC) for individual considerations.

The Graded Return to School Plan (GRTSP) may include:

- Reduced initial hours at school or reduce the class contact time (eg. 2-3 hours, two to three days a week)
- Commence GRTSP in the mornings when refreshed after a good night's sleep
- Gradually increase time at school and in class
- Introducing assessments when managing with classes and external study first

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request.

As an educator you can help the student's transition by considering:

Assessments/Assignments

- Assessments should be conducted early in the day before fatigue influences performance
- Provide additional time on initial return to assessments (10 min for every hour)
- Allow for assessments in a quiet area

Assessments/assignments to be spread throughout a school week so that no two assessments are on the same/consecutive days. No multiple assessments/assignments in a week

Teaching style

- Introducing priority or easier subjects first, based on student goals
- Provide a step by step approach to learning new information, so that limited information is given at a time and with enough time to process without undue time pressure. Avoid placing the student on the spot to provide answers in front of the class
- The student may require additional instruction to ensure has understood what is required and how to start the process eg has a plan to work through the information
- Set routines to help with memory
- Encourage concentrating on one task at a time
- Encourage the use of organisational strategies eg. diary, writing clear notes
- Move from task to task (with different focus on different skills) to help extend concentration
- Consider how the student may be processing information to help with consolidating new learning ie. visually, practically doing, listening and remembering

Additional Breaks

- Flexibility for refresh breaks between/during classes
- A refresh break could be as quick as 10 min in every hour OR take off a whole period for unessential subjects initially (eg. form, assembly, PE, electives)
- Regular study breaks are recommended

Environment

- Quiet area available for breaks away from peers e.g. library, partitioned separate space in the back of the classroom. Using computers for social or academic purposes should be discouraged during this time to allow for a total break.
- Choosing a seat in class where there are less distractions
- Separate area/room for one on one learning

Additional Supports

- Education Assistant support (could be shared within a class) to prompt attention to task and/or when breaks from class are required
- Link with individual tutoring via Perth Children's Hospital and the Ronald Macdonald learning program, who prioritise year 12 students <https://www.rmhc.org.au/ronald-mcdonald-learning-program> and click on request RMLP Tuition.
- You may be able to link with Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology and/or Psychology Counselling services that are already linked with your school.
- Online/written options to consolidate what is taught in class

How to contact us

☎ (08) 6457 4488
☎ (08) 6457 4489
✉ shiu@health.wa.gov.au
🌐 nmhs.health.wa.gov.au

State Head Injury Unit
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
Ground Floor, 'E' Block
Hospital Ave, Nedlands WA 6009

For up-to-date parking information,
<https://qeimc.health.wa.gov.au/travel-access/parking/visitor-parking/>

