

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that often results in poor sleep, headaches, fatigue and difficulties with attention, concentration, memory, thought processing and critical thinking. Fatigue impairs all other functions and its management is critical in returning to work. It is expected that you will have a good recovery from your concussion but while you are recovering you need to manage your symptoms and gradually return to your usual activities and routines, including work.

Having the appropriate accommodations, strategies and supports will be helpful in the recovery process. You may want to discuss how to implement some of the following suggestions into your return to work plan with your employer/supervisor and review your return to work progress regularly with your Family Physician:

- If you don't feel your normal self and cannot concentrate you are unlikely to be much use at work, and it is better to take a few days off.
- Return to work only when the majority of symptoms have diminished and your physical and cognitive endurance can be maintained over the day
- Plan a gradual return to work e.g. start shorter hours/day and fewer days/week.
- Reduce your workload initially and build in rest periods.
- Modify or simplify the activities you do.
- Allow yourself more time to complete tasks or projects.
- Write things down if you find it hard to remember, make lists and use a daily planner.
- Try to do one thing at a time if you feel overwhelmed.
- If you are easily distracted, work in a quiet, distraction free place.
- Keep stress level low as stress may result in an increase of your symptoms.
- It will be important to apply energy conservation strategies (prioritize, plan, pace) while at work.
- It is recommended that you allow some time at the beginning of each workday to plan the tasks and expectations for the day without interruptions or other demands;
- It will be important to pace yourself throughout the day allowing for 'micro-breaks' before you feel fatigued; start with a 5-10 minute break every hour;
- Taking a 'micro brain break' means stopping your cognitive effort, removing yourself from the busy stimulating environment and going to a 'quiet place'. Perhaps that is a private room or sitting outside in nature listening to the sound of the wind or having a cup of tea or going for a gentle walk [do not think or worry while walking!]
- Wherever the place is focus or rest your mind on your breath; calm breathing can be learned in a meditation class or gentle yoga class;
- It may take you more time to complete your work; it is also important that you take your regular breaks e.g. 15 minutes for coffee break, 30 minutes for lunch;
- Do one thing at a time; deal with one person at a time;
- Avoid or limit being in noisy, busy, over stimulating areas; working in a quiet environment will help your concentration.
- If your symptoms increase this is a signal that you are doing too much and need to back off by reducing your effort.
- Overexertion and fatigue can slow down the recovery process.