

# Guideline for Concussion/Mild Traumatic Brain Injury and Persistent Symptoms

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition - for adults, +18 years of age



Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation  
Fondation ontarienne de neurotraumatologie

## Patient Version

This guideline has been created to help with management of concussion/mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI). It is only for management for adults over 18 years of age. The guideline can be used by patients when speaking with healthcare providers about their care. It covers getting a diagnosis, managing symptoms in the early phase (acute) and management in the longer recovery phase (persistent symptoms). It is based on up-to date, quality research evidence, the expertise of providers and the input of patients.

## 9) Cognitive Difficulties

Concussion/mTBI can cause cognitive difficulties. Cognitive difficulties can affect your ability to pay attention, remember, learn new things, and make good decisions. These difficulties might make it difficult to function in your everyday life, including at work, school, and social situations.

Cognitive symptoms can last longer and be more severe if a person has other conditions.

These include:

- ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder),
- learning disabilities,
- anxiety or mood disorders,
- sleep problems, or pain.

### Recovery from cognitive difficulties:

Most people recover from cognitive difficulties a few days to a few weeks after a concussion/mTBI, and most within 3 to 6 months. But in some people, cognitive symptoms persist for longer, which can make it difficult for them to return to their regular activities.

It is important to talk to your doctor or see a neuropsychologist if you think you have cognitive difficulties. If these difficulties persist, you may need some tests done. These tests will:

- assess your cognitive strengths and challenges,
- help you set goals for treatment,
- make plans for work or school, and
- provide information about your ability to function independently in your daily activities.



The results of these tests will also help to decide what treatments you may need. It will also identify if you need temporary accommodations or assistance at work or school, such as using schedules, working in a quiet space or pacing your activities.

Treatment can include rehabilitation strategies as well as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). These therapies can help you learn ways to cope with your cognitive difficulties and work around them. They can help reduce persistent symptoms so that you can gradually return to your normal activities at home, work, and school.