# Caffeine (and energy drinks) after a concussion

*Friendly disclaimer*

Energy drinks are often not recommended or even restricted for under-16s in the UK. From a medical point of view, it's important to talk about them openly, because many teenagers use them anyway.

- The safest choice in recovery is to avoid energy drinks altogether.
- If you do use them, keep it small, infrequent, and never mix with alcohol.

## Why this matters

After a concussion, your brain is more sensitive to sleep disruption, dehydration, and changes in mood. Caffeine and energy drinks can:

- Make it **harder to sleep** (and good sleep is vital for brain recovery).
- Increase **headaches, jitteriness, or anxiety**.
- Mask symptoms (you may feel more "awake" but your brain is still healing).

But caffeine is also common in daily life — tea, coffee, cola, chocolate, and energy drinks. The goal isn't to ban it forever, but to **reintroduce it sensibly**.

## The "Return to Caffeine & Energy Drink Pathway"

### Stage 1: Rest (Day 0–2)

- Best to avoid caffeine and energy drinks. Your brain needs calm, and good sleep is crucial.

### Stage 2: Re-introduce gently (Day 3–7)

- If you normally have tea, coffee, or cola, a small amount is okay if you are otherwise symptom-free at rest.
- Avoid high-caffeine energy drinks at this stage — they're more likely to cause headaches or sleep disruption.

### Stage 3: Building tolerance (Day 8 onwards)

- Moderate caffeine (1–2 cups of tea or coffee, or similar) is usually safe if you are symptom-free.
- If you want to try an energy drink, wait until this stage — and start with half a can to see how your body reacts.
- **Always avoid combining with alcohol** — it hides how drunk you are and increases risk of injury.

## Energy drink cautions

Many energy drinks contain **very high caffeine + sugar + other stimulants**.
They can cause:

- Headaches
- Dehydration
- Mood swings and irritability
- Sleep problems (making recovery longer)

Use them sparingly, not daily.

## Key Points

**Days 0–2:** avoid caffeine.
**Days 3–7:** small amounts of tea/coffee/cola are okay if symptom-free.
**Day 8+:** moderate caffeine is fine; energy drinks only with caution.
Always let your symptoms and sleep guide you.