Managing Irritability
What is irritability and what causes it?

Irritability is a feeling of agitation. When you’re irritable, you can become frustrated or upset easily. It can be experienced in response to stressful situations. It may be a symptom of anxiety or depression or it may be due to a physical health condition. After a concussion for example, our brains start working in overdrive trying to heal. This leaves the brain with limited capacity to deal with emotional issues and this is what can cause a change in behaviour, mood or personality.

When you are feeling irritable, you may experience one or more of the following:

- Sweating
- Racing heart
- Fast breathing
- Confusion
- Headaches
- Tearfulness
- Change in behaviours such as an angry or overreaction to certain things
- Change to general mood and emotions
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The underlying cause of irritability can vary, so it’s important your GP has the opportunity to meet with you and discuss your symptoms. Here at Southern Rehab we have a team of clinical experts who are experienced in helping people manage the symptoms of irritability. Our clinicians carefully listen and understand more about the changes you have noticed and will develop a personalised plan that will help you cope better with the changes you are experiencing.

They recommend the following to help you better cope:

Acceptance
Coping with irritability can be frustrating so a good way to alleviate mood changes can be simply to acknowledge and accept that a lack of motivation and irritability may be a symptom of psychological or physical factors. If you have had a concussion you can take comfort in knowing it will get better.

Create a routine
It’s a good idea to structure your day and get into a regular routine. For example, ensure that you go to bed and get up at the same time.

Pace yourself
It’s very important you reduce stress and a way to do this is to break down activities into small steps and focus on one step at a time. This will make your tasks seem less overwhelming.

Exercise and leisure time
Light exercise such as leisurely walks or yoga can help reduce stress. Also, it’s important to include fun activities into your day so that you are putting more attention on what is enjoyable rather than the things that cause you more stress.

Track your emotions
Learning to recognise what angers and irritates you means you are better equipped to manage the situations that trigger these feelings. Start by tracking what tasks you were doing, the situations that impacted your emotions, and record how it made you feel.
Ask for help

It is important you ask for help. Talk to your GP if your symptoms are not improving, or if the change to your moods and behaviour is affecting your personal life and relationships.

Other Useful Tips:

> Avoid caffeine, recreational drugs or alcohol while recovering.
> Minimise the time you spend on screens (including computers, TV, smartphones and tablets) as these devices are hard work for the brain.