

Discharge Concussion Education for Pediatric Patients (CDC)

Discharge Education for Your Child's Concussion

Your child was seen today for a concussion. This handout has information about how to help your child feel better. Watch for changes in how your child is acting or feeling and if symptoms get worse. You may notice changes in symptoms before your child does.

What is a Concussion?

A concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury. It is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or body that causes the head and brain to move quickly back and forth. This sudden movement can cause the brain to bounce around or twist in the skull, creating chemical changes in the brain and sometimes stretching and damaging the brain cells.

Signs of a More Serious Brain Injury

Call 9-1-1 or go to your emergency room if your child has any worrisome signs or symptoms, such as:

- A headache that gets worse and does not go away
- Significant nausea or repeated vomiting
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Convulsions or seizures (shaking or twitching)
- Loss of consciousness (passing out)

What Concussion Symptoms Could My Child Experience at Home?

Concussion symptoms may appear during the normal healing process and will generally improve over time. Most people with a concussion feel better within a couple of weeks. Some symptoms may appear right away, while other symptoms may not appear for hours or days after the injury. Your child may not realize they have some symptoms until they try to do their usual activities. If there are any symptoms that concern you or are getting worse, be sure to talk with your doctor or nurse.

Types of Concussion Symptoms	How Your Child May Feel			
THINKING/REMEMBERING	Difficulty thinking clearly	Feeling slowed down	Difficulty concentrating	Difficulty remembering new information
PHYSICAL	Headache Fuzzy or blurry vision	Nausea/vomiting (early on) Dizziness	Sensitivity to noise or light Balance problems	Feeling tired, having no energy
EMOTIONAL/MOOD	Irritability	Sadness	More emotional	Nervousness or anxiety
SLEEP	Sleeping more than usual	Sleeping less than usual	Trouble falling asleep	

What Steps Can I Take to Help My Child Feel Better?

<p>1. STEP 1: REST Your child should take it easy the first few days after the injury when symptoms are more severe.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early on, limit your child's physical and cognitive (thinking/remembering) activities to avoid causing symptoms to worsen. • Ensure your child avoids activities that can put them at risk for another injury to the head and brain. • Ensure your child gets a good night's sleep and takes naps during the day as needed.
<p>2. STEP 2: LIGHT ACTIVITY As your child starts to feel better, they can gradually return to their regular (non-strenuous) activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find relaxing activities at home for your child. Avoid activities that put them at risk for another injury to the head and brain. • Return to school on a gradual basis. Use your child's symptoms to guide their return to activities. If their symptoms do not worsen during an activity, then this activity is OK for them. If symptoms worsen, your child should cut back on how much they do that activity until tolerated.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your child gets maximum nighttime sleep. (To help, your child should avoid screen time and loud music before bed, sleep in a dark room, and keep to a fixed sleep and wake up schedule.) • Reduce daytime naps or return to your child’s regular daytime nap schedule (as appropriate for their age).
<p>3. STEP 3: MODERATE ACTIVITY</p> <p>When symptoms are mild and nearly gone, your child can return to most of their regular activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help your child take breaks only if their concussion symptoms worsen. • Return to a regular school schedule.
<p>4. STEP 4: BACK TO REGULAR ACTIVITY</p> <p>Recovery from a concussion is when your child is able to do all of their regular activities without experiencing any concussion symptoms.</p>	

You should also:

- Ask your child’s doctor or nurse about over-the-counter or prescription medications that are safe to take during recovery to help with symptoms (e.g., Ibuprofen or acetaminophen for headache).
- Limit the number of soft drinks or caffeinated items to help your child get enough rest.

Schedule a follow up appointment with your child’s regular doctor or nurse

When Can My Child Return to School or Work (if relevant)?

Your child may need to take a short time off from school or work. Ask their doctor or nurse for written instructions about when your child can safely return to school, sports, work and other activities, such as riding a bike or driving a car.

Written instructions from their doctor or nurse should help manage your child’s return to school or work. For a short time after a concussion, your child may need extra help or support, such as:

- Rest breaks
- Fewer hours at school or work
- More time to take tests or complete tasks
- Less time spent reading, writing, on the computer, or watching TV

If your child is having a difficult recovery, talk with their school or their employer about support services that may be available. For most people, only short-term changes or support services are needed as they recover from a concussion. Formal support services may be available to help people who are having a longer or more difficult recovery. If your child’s symptoms persist, talk with their doctor or nurse about formal support services they recommend. If the injury was work-related, make sure your child reports it right away to their employer and their workers’ compensation office.

When Can My Child Return to Sports and Recreational Activities?

Your child should **not** return to sports and recreational activities:

- On the same day of the injury AND
- Until they get the OK from a doctor with experience evaluating concussion.

Getting approval from a doctor to return to play is important since playing with a concussion may slow recovery. Also, a repeat concussion that occurs before the brain has fully healed can increase the chance for long-term problems. While rare, teens are at greater risk of suffering a severe brain injury when a repeat concussion occurs before the brain has fully healed. It can even be fatal.

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Returning to sports and recreational activities involves a step-wise process that is carefully managed and monitored by your child's doctor or nurse. When available, be sure to also work closely with your child's certified athletic trainer. To learn more about how to safely return to sports and download a 5-step return to play plan, go to: www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP.

What If I Don't Feel Like My Child is Getting Better?

If you do not feel like your child is getting better, talk with their doctor or nurse. Keep track of your child's concussion symptoms and share them with their doctor or nurse. This may help their doctor or nurse identify the best treatments for your child's symptoms. You may also need to take your child to see a specialist in treating brain injuries. Ask your child's doctor or nurse for names of brain injury specialists in your area.

Where Can I Learn More about Concussion?

More information on concussion, tips to help your child feel better, and steps to help your child safely return to school and sports can be found at: www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP.

The information provided in this handout or through linkages to other sites is not a substitute for medical or professional care. Questions about diagnosis and treatment for concussion should be directed to your child's doctor or other healthcare provider.