

Taking Care of Your Child

After Their Head's Been Hurt

Many children who hurt their heads get well and have no long-term problems. Some have problems that may not be noticed right away. You may see changes in your child over the next several months that concern you. The following are some common signs that your child may have a mild brain injury.

Symptoms

Headaches & Pain

- Headaches that keep coming back
- Head, face or jaw pain
- Unexplained body pain

Balance Problems

- Dizziness
- Tripping or falling often

Sensory Changes

- Bothered by smells, lights or sounds
- Blurry or double vision
- Changes in taste, smell or appetite
- Ringing in ears, hearing loss

Sleep Problems

- Tiredness, change in sleep patterns
- Mixing days and nights up

Personality, Mood & Behavior

- Sad, anxious or restless
- Irritability, mood swings
- Slow to respond
- Taking risks without thinking first
- Starting to use or reacting differently to alcohol or drugs
- Changes in sexual behavior (older children)
- Acts differently around others, wants to be alone

Thinking & Communication

- Memory or concentration problems
- Reacting or thinking slowly
- Easily confused or mixed up
- Difficulty understanding what is said or read
- Trouble making decisions
- Trouble planning/starting/finishing a task
- Trouble listening, staying on topic, talking too much

What to do if you experience the symptoms listed and they don't go away:

- Talk with your doctor about a referral to a specialist in brain injury
- Contact the Brain Injury Association of Virginia for more information about brain injury and resources in Virginia at 804-444-6443

Immediate Medical Attention

Go to the Emergency Room or call your doctor if your child suddenly experiences any of the following:

- Severe headache that gets worse or does not go away
- Seizures: eyes fluttering, body going stiff, staring into space
- Loss of consciousness
- Sudden onset of weakness, numbness
- Repeated vomiting
- Will not stop crying, cannot be consoled, will not nurse or eat

Simple steps you can follow to take care of your child after a concussion*

- Help your child get plenty of rest (including no late nights and no sleepovers)
- Avoid high-risk/physically demanding activities such as sports, riding a bike, "playing rough"
- Avoid mentally demanding activities such as sustained computer use and video games
- Tell your child's school, babysitter, coach and others about the injury
- Talk with your child's doctor about a plan to gradually increase your child's school and play activities

What about returning to school?

Returning to school is a big part of recovery for children and teens, since so much of their lives tend to be focused on school. Children with a TBI may experience problems that affect school work, including difficulty learning new information, knowledge gaps cognitive deficits, or emotional and behavioral problems. Every student with a brain injury has unique needs and problems, and the school should already have or create a clear protocol for return to the classroom. If you have questions or are looking for more information, please contact us.

This article is provided for informational and educational purposes only. The information is not intended as a substitute for professional advice, diagnosis or treatment, and you should not use the information in place of the advice of your medical, psychological, or legal providers.

This project is supported [in part] through state general funds (Contract #16-002A) administered by the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS).