

# Taking Care of Your Child

## After Their Head's Been Hurt

There are many ways our child's head can get hurt. A fall, a sports accident, or any sort of blow or jolt to the head can cause a concussion, which is a mild brain injury. Many children who hurt their heads get well and have no long-term problems. However, some have problems that may not be noticed right away. Knowing the signs, symptoms, and appropriate recovery options is important for all parents to understand to keep their children safe and healthy.

### 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 1-800-444-6443

## Immediate Medical Attention

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

- 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 concussion 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 concussion 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.

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