

FACTSHEET

This fact sheet is for education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professionals to make sure this information is right for your child. If you would like to provide feedback on this fact sheet, please visit: www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/fact-sheets/feedback-form.

Mild head injury and concussion

A concussion is an injury to the brain caused by sudden strong movement of the brain against the skull. This is caused by a collision with another person or object. A child does not need to be knocked out (lose consciousness) to have concussion. Most concussion injuries do not involve any loss of consciousness.

If your child receives a bump or blow to the head or body and that causes a jarring of the head or neck - it is important to monitor them for signs and symptoms.

When should I take my child to a doctor?

If your child has any of the signs or symptoms listed then they should be assessed by a doctor. It is important to note when, for how long, and how bad they are so you can tell the doctor. Signs and symptoms may not show up until 24-48 hours after the head injury.

Signs observed by others:

- Appearing dazed or stunned
- Repeating questions
- Can't recall events before or after the injury
- Confused about events
- Showing personality or behaviour changes

Symptoms reported by the child:

- Headache or "pressure" in the head
- Dizziness and/or loss of balance
- Feeling tired (fatigued)
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Trouble sleeping
- Does not "feel right"
- Feeling more emotional, e.g. sad or nervous
- Trouble thinking clearly, concentrating or remembering

When should I take my child to the emergency department?

Take your child to the nearest Emergency Department if these signs or symptoms appear or are getting worse in the first 48 hours after a head injury

- Losing consciousness (even briefly)
- Seizure
- New headache or headache is getting worse
- Ongoing or worse neck pain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Becoming drowsy or can't be woken up
- Having any trouble walking
- Blurry or double vision
- Weakness, numbness or tingling in the arms, legs or face
- Slurred speech
- Being more confused, unusual behaviour, more irritable

In an emergency dial 000 for an ambulance.

Treatment

The most important treatment for a head injury is complete rest both physically and mentally. Children and adolescents should not exercise, use computer screens, and play video games or study for at least 24 hours. It is likely they will need some time away from school and sports. A gradual and staged return to school and sporting activities should be planned.

If a concussion occurs during sport or activity your child should stop playing immediately and not return until seen and cleared to do so by a doctor.

Recovery

Initially and in the coming weeks after injury you or your child's teacher may notice some changes in your child. Their behaviour and/or their ability to concentrate and understand information at home or at school may be affected. It is important to remember that these changes are a normal part of the recovery process and may persist for several months.

Return to school

It is important to let the school know about your child's head injury. Sometimes children who have had a head injury find it hard to concentrate in school and may have a return or worsening of symptoms such as headache or nausea. They may experience fatigue and become tired much quicker. Children and adolescents should stay home from school if any of their symptoms get worse when they are in class.

After your child has been back at school for one month, we suggest you talk with the teacher about whether there are ongoing changes in your child's performance since the head injury. Any concerns should be discussed with your GP or the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program listed in the box.

Return to sport

It is important to inform your child's school and sporting coach or club that they have had a head injury. Children and adolescents should not participate in school or club sports or exercise until they are completely symptom free and cleared to do so by a doctor. Following a concussion your child's reaction times and thinking may be slower putting them at risk of further injury.

If you have any concerns or your child is experiencing ongoing symptoms after 3-4 weeks please contact the Coordinator of the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program at one of the following hospitals.

They will be able to give you advice and refer your child to your local service.

- Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick
02 9382 1590
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead
02 9845 2132
- John Hunter Children's Hospital Newcastle
02 4925 7963

For other resources about concussion visit the

Concussion page on Kids Health Website:

<http://kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/campaigns/concussion>

