

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, your child should stop playing immediately. It is important to monitor them for signs and symptoms of concussion.

- Feeling more emotional(e.g. sad or nervous)
- Trouble thinking clearly, concentrating or remembering

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 for you to record these symptoms. Note when they occurred, how long they lasted, and how severe they were, so that you can tell the doctor.

Signs and symptoms may not show up until 24-48 hours after the head injury.

What are the signs and symptoms of concussion?

Signs observed by others:

- Appearing dazed or stunned
- Repeating questions
- Problems remembering 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 / loss of balance
- Nausea / vomiting
- Numbness / tingling
- Feeling tired (fatigued)/ slowed down
- Sensitivity to light / noise
- Visual problems (e.g. double vision)
- Drowsiness
- Trouble sleeping
- Does not “feel right”

When should I take my child to the Emergency department?

Take your child to the nearest Emergency department if at any time your child develops HEAD BUMPS

- H worsening Headache, seizure, unconscious
- E worsening Eye problems (blurred/ double vision)
- A Abnormal behavior change
- D Dizziness, persistent vomiting

B Balance dysfunction with weakness or numbness in legs/arms

U Unsteady on feet, slurred speech

M Memory impaired, confused, disoriented

P Poor concentration, drowsy, sleepy

S Something’s not right (concerned about child)

In an emergency dial 000 for an ambulance.

Remember

Children and adolescents should not participate in school, club sports or physical activity until they are completely symptom free and cleared by a doctor to do so.

Treatment

The most important treatment for a head injury is complete physical and mental rest. Children and adolescents should not exercise, use computer screens, play video games or study for at least 24-48 hours. Your child will need some time away from school and sports. A gradual and staged return to school and sporting activities should be planned by your doctor.

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 and may have a return or worsening of symptoms such as headache or nausea. They may experience fatigue and become tired more easily.

Following a concussion your doctor will advise a gradual return to school. Students returning to school may need to:

- have a gradual return to school, starting with fewer hours and building up to a half then full day.
- take rest breaks when needed.
- be given help and extra time to complete tests/exams or assignments.

Return to sport

It is important to not only let your child's school know about your child's head injury, but also the sporting coach or club. Following a concussion your child's reaction times and thinking may be slower putting them at risk of further injury. Your doctor will advise a gradual and staged return to activity. Children returning to sport may need to:

- begin with low level intensity physical activity (e.g. 10 minute walk).
- gradually increase non-contact activity, if they are symptom free.
- seek medical clearance before returning to regular activity, including contact and collision sports.

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 Kids Health Website:

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

