

Concussion: After Your Child's Visit

Care Instructions

A concussion is a kind of injury to the brain. It happens when the head receives a hard blow. The impact can jar or shake the brain against the skull. This interrupts the brain's normal activities. Although your child may have cuts or bruises on the head or face, he or she may have no other visible signs of a brain injury. In most cases, damage to the brain from a concussion can't be seen in tests such as a CT or MRI scan.

For a few weeks, your child may have low energy, dizziness, trouble sleeping, a headache, ringing in the ears, or nausea. Your child may also feel anxious, grumpy, or depressed. He or she may have problems with memory and concentration. These symptoms are common after a concussion. They should slowly improve over time. Sometimes this takes weeks or even months.

Follow-up care is a key part of your child's treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if your child is having problems. It's also a good idea to know your child's test results and keep a list of the medicines your child takes.

How can you care for your child at home?

Pain control

- Use ice or a cold pack for 10 to 20 minutes at a time on the part of your child's head that hurts. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your child's skin.
- Be safe with medicines. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
 - ◆ If the doctor gave your child a prescription medicine for pain, give it as prescribed.
 - ◆ If your child is not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if your child can take an over-the-counter medicine.

Recovery

- Watch your child closely for the next 24 hours. Check for signs that your child's symptoms are getting worse.
- Help your child get plenty of rest. Your child needs to rest his or her body **and** brain:
 - ◆ Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep at night. Your child also needs to take it easy during the day.
 - ◆ Help your child avoid activities that take a lot of physical or mental work. This includes housework, exercise, schoolwork, video games, text messaging, and using the computer.
 - ◆ You may need to change your child's school schedule while he or she recovers.
 - ◆ Let your child return to normal activities slowly. Your child should not try to do too much at once.
- Keep your child from activities that could lead to another head injury. Follow your doctor's instructions for a gradual return to activity and sports.

How should your child return to play?

Your child's return to sports should be gradual. It should only begin when all symptoms of a concussion are gone, both while at rest and during exercise or exertion.

Doctors and concussion specialists suggest steps to follow for returning to sports after a concussion. Use these steps as a guide. Your doctor must always make the final decision about whether your child is ready to go back to full-contact play. Your child should slowly progress through the following levels of activity:

1. No activity. This means complete physical and mental rest.
2. Light aerobic activity. This can include walking, swimming, or other exercise at less than 70% of your child's maximum heart rate. No resistance training is included in this step.
3. Sport-specific exercise. This includes running drills or skating drills (depending on the sport), but no head impact.
4. Noncontact training drills. This includes more complex training drills such as passing. Your child may also begin light resistance training.
5. Full contact practice. **A medical professional must agree that your child is ready.** Your child can participate in normal training.
6. Return to normal game play. This is the final step and allows your child to join in normal game play.

Watch and keep track of your child's progress. It should take at least 6 days for your child to go from light activity to normal game play.

Make sure that your child can stay at each new level of activity for at least 24 hours without symptoms, or as long as your doctor says, before doing more. If one or more symptoms come back, have your child return to a lower level of activity for at least 24 hours. He or she should not move on until all symptoms are gone.

When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think your child may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- Your child has a seizure.
- Your child passes out (loses consciousness).
- Your child is confused or hard to wake up.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- Your child has new or worse vomiting.
- Your child seems less alert.
- Your child has new weakness or numbness in any part of the body.

Watch closely for changes in your child's health, and be sure to contact your doctor if:

- Your child does not get better as expected.
- Your child has new symptoms, such as headaches, trouble concentrating, or changes in mood.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter **R145** in the search box to learn more about "**Concussion: After Your Child's Visit.**"

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