

Your child has a concussion

Concussion is a traumatic brain injury

A concussion is caused by a force, jolt, or blow to the head, neck, or face. This can happen after a fall, car accident, or sports injury. It can range from mild to severe. Children and teenagers have rapidly growing brains that are more vulnerable to injury. Each year there are approximately 3.8 million sports-related concussions.

A blow to the head causes brain tissue to swell, bruise, or bleed. This disturbs the way the brain works. The brain has to work longer and harder to process and understand even simple information.

Activities that require thinking or concentration will add stress to an injured brain. These activities include schoolwork, reading, watching TV, using electronic devices, playing video games, etc.

Symptoms of concussion

It is possible to have a concussion and not know it. Symptoms can appear immediately or show up days later after the initial injury. Symptoms may last for hours, days, weeks, or longer.

- Most concussions do not cause you to lose consciousness.

- Sometimes you may not notice problems until returning to school or normal activities.
- Symptoms such as irritability may be mistaken as behavioral problems.
- Small children may not be able to tell you how they feel.

Not everyone will have the same symptoms or have the same degree of symptoms.

Children may experience prolonged symptoms. This can interfere with their daily activities.

Teen athletes may deny or downplay symptoms so they can continue to play sports.

Evaluation of concussion

If left untreated, a concussion can have serious consequences. The most concerning effects of a concussion usually appear within 24 to 72 hours after the injury.

A complete evaluation is important to:

- Determine the effects of the concussion.
- Develop the best treatment plan.
- Decide when your child is ready to return to normal activities at home, school, and sports.

Treatment for concussion

Immediately remove child from the source of the injury. The best initial treatment for all concussions is to rest the body and brain for the first 24 to 72 hours.

Prevent another injury

A small, minor blow to the head can easily cause a second concussion. Slower reaction times and poor concentration skills increase the risk of developing another brain injury.

A second injury, before the injured brain has healed, causes even more damage. This can leave long-lasting effects on the brain. This includes recurrent seizures, on-going physical problems, personality changes, or even death.



Most important after a concussion is to prevent another injury.

Return-to-play protocol very specific

We use test results to develop the necessary plans for treatment, recovery, and for returning to usual activities.

Recovery time for a concussion

Concussions in youth heal more slowly than adults.

Goals for resting the brain

- Reduce mental activities until symptoms improve.
- Gradually begin increasing the length and difficulty of these activities as symptoms allow.

Average recovery time

- Adults: 10 to 14 days
- Teenagers and older children: 3 to 4 weeks
- Younger children: 1 month or longer

Children and teens with a second concussion or history of depression, migraines, anxiety, or learning problems will need 1 month or longer.

Physical rest for brain and body

Follow daily routine

- Have child get up and do a few low-demand activities during the day.
- No late nights.
- Keep same bedtime with a quiet room and soft lighting.
- Take naps when tired but not longer than 1 to 2 hours.
- Take rest breaks as needed.

No busy environments

This includes shopping malls, noisy restaurants, concerts, sporting events, and parties.

No sports or active play

- No activities that require a helmet or can result in falling or another injury. This includes running, jumping, jogging, tumbling, bike riding, skating, swimming, weight training, etc.
- No activities that require quick decision-making, such as driving a car.

Turn off all screens

- Limit the use of TVs, cell phones, tablets, and computer screens during recovery.

- Schoolwork, instant messaging, texting, video games, etc. require mental concentration.
- Screens also introduce lights and motion. This may slow down recovery or aggravate symptoms.

Recovery plan

Clear communication is important for your child. Make sure everyone understands the recovery plan. Mixed messages can cause unnecessary distress and confusion.

Who to talk to

Notify the following group about your child's concussion as soon as possible.

- Explain the type of injury and recovery time.
- Discuss ways each person can help your child during recovery.

Who to notify:

- Coaches
- Teachers
- School nurse
- Athletic trainer
- Employer
- School administrators
- Guidance counselors

School attendance

Some children are not able to attend full school days while recovering from a concussion.

School accommodations

Changing or making adjustments in classes, homework, and testing can help while recovering.

Returning to sports

Your child will be excluded from all organized sports as well as any recreational activity that can cause another concussion injury.



You will need a return-to-play protocol or clearance from the medical team in order to resume sports.

Neurosciences

For locations and contacts visit:

cookchildrens.org/services/neurosciences/



These instructions are only general guidelines. Your healthcare provider may give you special instructions. If you have questions or concerns, please call your healthcare provider.