

HEAD INJURY ADVICE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS

We have found no evidence that your child's head injury is serious. However, the first 48 hours following a head injury are crucial and you should ensure that your child is accompanied at all times during this period.



RED FLAGS

If any of the following are new or persistent, please return to the Emergency Department as soon as possible:

- Loss of consciousness or inability to awaken or arouse your child
- Convulsions or fits
- Confusion or unusual behavioural change
- Drowsiness for more than an hour when they should be awake
- Severe or worsening headache or neck pain, especially if it does not improve with painkillers
- Vomiting – three or more episodes at least 30 minutes apart
- Problems speaking or understanding someone's speech
- Problems in understanding or recognizing people or faces
- Weakness or numbness in one or more arms or legs
- If applicable, loss of balance or new problems walking
- Problems with your child's eyesight
- If applicable, loss of bowel or bladder control
- Bleeding or drainage of fluid from your child's ear or nose
- New onset of deafness
- Does not wake for feeds or cries constantly and cannot be soothed

How can I look after my child?

Do not leave your child alone for the first 48 hours after leaving hospital.

Ensure that they have plenty of rest initially – it is OK to sleep and there is no need to wake them up frequently for someone 'to check on them'.

A gradual return to school/normal activities is always recommended.

Avoid listening to music, watching TV and using electronic devices e.g. mobile phones (even texting), computer games, until symptoms have completely resolved.

Do not allow them to return to school until you feel that they have completely recovered.

Do not allow them to play contact sports until they have completely recovered and, ideally, for three weeks.

If your child has a headache:

- Take painkillers as prescribed but do not take NSAIDs such as Ibuprofen, Voltaren and Naproxen
- Use ice packs
- Avoid moving or bending rapidly and strenuous activity

If your child has nausea:

- Have a light diet and sips of water



Concussion

How do I know if my child has concussion?

Concussion is a temporary brain injury that causes disturbance of normal brain function. It is diagnosed clinically and cannot be seen on CT or MRI scan. It is caused by a direct blow to the head or, sometimes, by a blow to another part of the body that causes sudden jarring of the head. A person does not have to be knocked out or lose consciousness to be concussed but someone who has been knocked out is classed as concussed. It can affect the normal functioning of the brain but is not always caused by physical damage to the brain itself. Symptoms can be delayed but most appear within 48 hours.

Symptoms your child may tell you:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Ringing in the ears
- Feeling sick
- Difficulty concentrating
- Blurred vision
- Feeling 'dazed'
- Feeling 'not quite right'

Things you may notice:

- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Poor concentration
- Easily distracted
- More emotional
- 'Slowed down'

Common signs and symptoms: it is expected to have one or more of these symptoms as a result of concussion:

- PHYSICAL: headache / nausea / dizziness / balance problems / fatigue / sensitive to light / noise
- COGNITIVE: feeling foggy / slowed down, difficulty remembering / concentrating
- EMOTIONAL: feeling irritable / sad / nervous
- SLEEP: drowsiness / sleeping less or more / trouble falling asleep

How do you recover from a concussion?

- Most concussions heal over a period of two to four weeks
- It is important that your child's symptoms are monitored by doctors specialised in concussion; your child should be reviewed two to three days after the concussion has been diagnosed to reassess and plan the best recovery strategy
- Your child's brain needs time to heal and relative physical and mental rest is the best medicine for this
- Your child should NOT participate in any activities that could result in another head injury (e.g. sports, horse or bike riding, water slides, rollercoasters etc.) during recovery
- While recovering, your child is more vulnerable to having a repeat concussion. In rare cases, repeat concussions can cause permanent brain damage and even death
- Avoid activities that may cause symptoms to worsen such as:
 - Using ear buds or headphones
 - Loud or bright environments such as movie theatres, malls, supermarkets
 - Using computers / video games / phones or backlit screens for extended periods
- Get adequate sleep; your child may need more hours than usual or take daytime naps
- Your child may need to miss a few days of school and postpone exams, have extra breaks at school and limit homework
- If your child feels well enough, light activity which does not provoke symptoms such as walking, gentle swimming, or easy stationary bike is OK
- Once your child's symptoms are completely gone, they should complete a step-wise gradual return to sport protocol and will be re-evaluated by their doctor before full clearance. Your doctor will give you information on how to do this once you are ready to start.

Appointments with our Concussion Specialist team Dr Alan Kourie, Dr Kate Jordan and Dr. Stephan Jacolino can be booked by calling **800 1999** or on the [MyMediclinic 24/7 app](#)