



Head Injury: Concussion

Your child has been seen at Nationwide Children's Hospital because of a head injury. At this time, we do not think it is necessary to admit him or her to the hospital. However, you will need to watch him closely for the next 24 to 48 hours. If you feel that you cannot do this, please tell your doctor or nurse before you leave.

What to Expect

Your child may:

- Be sleepy. It is okay to let him sleep.
- Be nauseated or vomit.
- Have a mild to moderate headache. You may give _____mg of Tylenol® up to every 4 hours as needed for the pain.
- Be more fussy, moody or irritable.
- Have a shorter attention span and poor memory.
- Feel dizzy from time to time.
- Be sensitive to light.
- Be sensitive to noise.

Depending on the degree of head injury, the symptoms may last minutes to weeks. Regardless of the degree of injury, it is important that your child have medical follow-up with a doctor experienced with head injuries.

- Tell the doctor if your child is having trouble doing things he was able to do before the head injury, including schoolwork.
- Tell your child's teachers that he has had a head injury so teachers can allow for changes in behavior and ability to concentrate, if needed.

When to Call the Doctor

You will need to return to the Emergency Department or call your medical provider if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms:

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When to Call the Doctor, continued

- Repeated or projectile vomiting
- Child is hard to wake up or quickly falls back to sleep after waking
- A major change in behavior or personality, such as confusion, impulsiveness, recklessness, aggressiveness, or abnormal behavior.
- Complaints of worsening headaches that are not relieved with Tylenol®
- Bleeding or clear fluid from the nose or ears
- Hearing problems
- Convulsions or seizures
- Staggering or swaying while walking
- Weakness or dizziness
- Eye changes such as crossed eyes, droopy eyelids, or trouble using eyes
- Blurred or double vision
- Numbness or tingling in face, arms or legs
- Loss of consciousness (child does not wake up when you touch and talk to him)
- Your child does not "look right" to you or seems to be getting worse instead of better

Activity

The severity of symptoms guides what activities your child is able to do and how soon. There are no hard and fast rules. Your child's doctor will help decide what is safe for your child.

The following activities may be allowed after 1 to 2 days of rest as long as they do not cause symptoms to increase very much:

- Watching TV and listening to quiet music (avoid headphones)
- **Limited** technology use, such as computer time and phone texting
- Board games and card games that do not need a lot of concentration
- Reading and doing homework for brief periods of time
- Going for walks, if your child is able to without problems

Most children return to school in 2 to 5 days following a concussion. Your child's symptoms may not have all gone away before he goes back to school. It is best if he stays home if symptoms are bad enough to prevent learning **or** he cannot make it through at least a half day of school.

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Activity, continued

Participation in the following activities **is not** allowed until the doctor says it is okay:

- Gym and recess
- Contact sports and rough play
- Activities that require balance, such as bike riding, skate boarding, swimming, skiing, and tree climbing
- Operating motor vehicles, including ATVs, motorcycles, motor scooters, snowmobiles and cars

Preventing Future Injuries

Passenger safety. Use proper child passenger restraints (car seat or booster seat) for age and size of child.

Sports safety. Make sure your child:

- Wears a helmet that fits properly and protective gear when using a bike, skateboard, scooter, roller-skates or participating in a contact sport like football.
- Learns and uses proper technique when playing sports, such as tackling in football and “heading” the ball in soccer.
- Always tells someone right away if he hits his head and does not feel normal afterwards.

Street safety. Children should be taught to play where it is safe and supervised. Most children can be taught to safely cross the street alone at about 10 years of age.

If you need a doctor for your child, call the Nationwide Children's Referral and Information Line at (614) 722-KIDS.