

Helping Children Cope After Trauma

Most children do not have long-term emotional issues after a serious injury or traumatic event. However, traumatic events can have long-term effects on their health and development. Below are some things to be aware of as your child recovers from a trauma that will reduce the chances of long-term problems.

What to look for at home

If these things occur, it may mean that your child feels stress after a traumatic event:

- fearful
- restless
- problems during sleep, like:
 - nightmares
 - jerky movements
 - wakes up often
 - no longer sleeps in their own bed
 - returns to thumb-sucking or sleeping with a stuffed animal for comfort
- less independent or acts younger than actual age
- needs more support or reminders to complete self-care tasks
- changes in mood or behavior, which could include more sadness, irritability or anger
- wants to be close to adults that are important to them
- lack of focus on typical tasks or schoolwork
- anxious
 - easily startled
 - seems to be waiting for something bad to happen
 - wants to stay closer to home or with comforting people
- avoids normal, everyday situations or objects
- visions or frequent memories of the event

What to do after a trauma

- go back to a regular schedule at home
 - set a daily routine to reduce fears and worries
- set limits on behavior
 - give feedback to your child often when displaying poor attitude or behavior
 - praise your child for good behavior
- talk about the accident
 - use the event as a chance to teach safe behaviors
 - do not avoid the situation or the place where the trauma happened
- help your child to do things on their own when possible to build their self-confidence and sense of safety
- seek support from family, friends, hospital staff or a counselor

Hospital resources

The Trauma Social Workers and Pediatric Psychologists are part of your child's medical team during their hospital stay. Social Work and Psychology meet often with patients and families after trauma or an injury. If you have concerns about your child's or family's adjustment to one of these, tell the medical staff and ask them to contact Social Work.

After your child is discharged from the hospital, you can contact:

- Trauma Team Social Workers at (614) 722-6300.
- Psychology at (614) 722-4700, Monday through Friday, during normal business hours.

For an emergency, even after business hours, you can contact the Nationwide Children's Hospital Behavioral Crisis line at (614) 722-1800.