

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Concussion in a Child

## 3 Years Old or Older

### What is a concussion?

A **concussion** is an injury to the brain. Concussions are usually caused by a blow or injury to the head. It is a type of **traumatic brain injury** (TBI). A concussion can cause a person's brain to not function like normal. Any injury to the head should always be taken seriously.

Your child had a concussion. Sometimes the doctor will order tests to check for an injury to the brain, such as an x-ray or CT scan. However, these tests are not always needed in order to diagnose a concussion. Doctors can usually diagnose a concussion based on common symptoms.

Sometimes symptoms from a concussion happen right away and sometimes symptoms do not happen for hours or days after the injury.

### Common symptoms of concussions include:

- Headache
- Feeling 'dizzy' or 'fuzzy'
- Vomiting or nausea
- Memory problems
- Tires easily
- Unable to focus
- Trouble walking or acting clumsy
- Cranky, irritable, or depressed
- Sensitive to bright lights or loud noises
- Trouble sleeping

## Treatment for a concussion:

- Sleep or rest quietly for the first 24 hours after the injury. It is safe for your child to sleep even though your child had a concussion.
- Give pain medicine as ordered by your child's doctor for any headaches, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®).
- Make sure your child is drinking lots of fluids, especially water. If your child has nausea or is vomiting, offer small amounts of food several times a day until your child's appetite is back to normal. If your child has a prescription for ondansetron (Zofran®), give as directed by your child's doctor.
- How active your child can be is based on your child's symptoms. If symptoms return or get worse, it is time to stop and rest. For example, if your child is sensitive to light, have your child wear sunglasses outside. Another example would be if your child has trouble with watching TV or looking at screens (such as a computer or tablet), stop this activity and rest.
- It takes time for the brain to heal. Be patient.
- Schedule a follow up appointment with your child's doctor or with the Concussion Clinic at Phoenix Children's Hospital at 602-933-0440. Your child needs to be seen 1 to 2 weeks after the concussion.

## Return to school:

This is also called **return to learn**.

### If your child's concussion symptoms have resolved:

If your child does not have any symptoms of a concussion and has not missed more than a week of school, then your child may return to school. Your child may need:

- Increased time to finish work in class and homework assignments
- No timed tests
- No contact or collision-type activities in physical education (P.E.) or recess until your child's doctor says it is okay for your child to do these activities
- Mind (**cognitive**) breaks for 2-3 minutes every 20 minutes of class time

If at school and concussion symptoms increase, your child should go to the nurse's office to rest and drink some water. If the symptoms do not get better with rest, have the school nurse give your child pain medicine. If symptoms still do not get better within 30 minutes after pain medicine, your child needs to go home.

## **If your child still has symptoms of a concussion:**

If your child still has symptoms of a concussion, your child should rest one week without going to school or completing any school work. It is important to slowly return to normal activity such as school and sports. If your child is not able to go to school after a week because of the symptoms from the concussion, it is important to see your child's doctor or Concussion Clinic to help make a plan to return to school.

## **Sports and activities:**

Your child should not play any sports or activities until cleared by your child's doctor or the Concussion Clinic. A second head injury can take longer for the brain to heal and sometimes can even lead to death. Ask your child's doctor or the Concussion Clinic when it is safe for your child to return to sports and activities.

For more information about returning to sports and activity, ask your child's nurse or doctor for the handout, **Returning to Organized Athletic Activity After a Concussion, #1801.**

## **When to bring your child back to the emergency room:**

Bring your child back to the emergency room if your child:

- Has more than 3 episodes of vomiting or it lasts more than 6 hours
- Is hard to wake up
- Has a seizure or convulsion
- Complains of neck pain

## **Now that you've read this:**

- Tell your nurse or doctor when you should follow up with your child's doctor or the Concussion Clinic. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor when it is safe for your child to go back to school or return to learn. (Check when done.)



- If you have any questions or concerns,
- call your child's doctor or
  - call The Concussion Clinic 602-933-0440

If you want to know more about child health and illness,  
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
602-933-1400  
866-933-6459  
[www.phoenixchildrens.org](http://www.phoenixchildrens.org)  
[www.theemilycenter.org](http://www.theemilycenter.org)  
Facebook: [facebook.com/theemilycenter](https://facebook.com/theemilycenter)  
Twitter: @emilycenter

**Disclaimer**

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

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#1774 • Written by the Concussion Education Team at PCH  
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## Concussion in a Child 3 Years Old or Older

Name of Health Care Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Date returned: \_\_\_\_\_  db

### Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  Yes  No

easy to read?  Yes  No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  Yes  No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading  
this handout?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any  
questions about the subject?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center  
Health Education Specialist  
Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

602-933-1395

**Thank you for helping us!**