

Concussion in Children and Teenagers (4 - 17)

What is a concussion?

A concussion is a mild type of traumatic brain injury that changes the way the brain normally works. A concussion is caused by an impact to the head, neck or body that causes the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth.

What might look like a mild bump to the head can be enough to cause a concussion. Concussions can have a more serious effect on a young, developing brain and need to be managed correctly.

A child/teenager does not have to lose consciousness ("be knocked out") to have a concussion. More than 90% of concussions do not involve a loss of consciousness.

Ways children and teenagers may experience a concussion

The most common ways children/teenagers may suffer a concussion are from falls, sports, school accidents, road traffic accidents, being struck by an object, or from an assault (including domestic, family and interpersonal violence).

How do I know if a child/teenager may have a concussion?

Concussion can cause many different signs (things you can see such as falling over, knocking their head) and symptoms (things that people say they are experiencing). Just one sign or symptom is enough to indicate that a concussion may have occurred.

Sometimes the symptoms may appear when the concussion occurs. In other cases, they may take time to develop, showing up or worsening in the hours or days that follow. That's why it's important to continue to monitor your child/teenager for 24 - 48 hours after a suspected or diagnosed concussion.

Red flags are signs and symptoms that may indicate more severe injury to the brain. If a child/teenager shows any of the following red flags, **seek medical attention immediately.**

Symptoms	RED FLAGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headaches or feeling of pressure in head• Dizziness• Changes in vision• Confusion• Memory loss (amnesia)• Increased irritability, frustration• Feeling tired or drowsy• Not feeling right• Nausea	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of consciousness or worsening conscious state (passing out)• Increased drowsiness (changes to alertness)• Seizures or convulsions (twitching or shaking)• Unequal pupil size in eyes• Repeated vomiting• Continuous bleeding or fluid from ear or nose• Neck pain or tenderness• Difficulty recognising people or places• Slurred speech• Weakness or inability to move body as usual, decreased coordination• Complaints about numbness, tingling, burning sensation in arms or legs• Increased restlessness, agitation or confusion• Unusual behaviour
<p>Delayed Symptoms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persistent headaches• Difficulties remembering or concentrating• Sensitivity to light or noise• Feelings of sadness or anxiety• Changes in sleep patterns or fatigue	

Concussion Management and Recovery

The first 24 - 48 hours following a concussion should be a period of relative (not strict) rest. Following on from this time period your child/teenager may still take a number of weeks to recover.

General suggestions to help children/teenagers recover include:

- Children/teenagers should be observed by a responsible adult for the first 24 - 48 hours. Seek immediate medical attention if they develop any red flags.
- Children/teenagers may return to light physical activity during this time (e.g. walking or gentle stationary bike riding) as long as it doesn't make symptoms more than mildly worse.
- Light cognitive activity, but limit screen time (phones, tablets, TVs, laptops, gaming devices) in the first 48 hours following their injury.
- Use Paracetamol if needed for pain relief, and follow the packet instructions. You can use ice over painful or swollen areas for 15-20 minutes at a time in the initial period following injury.
- If the teenager has their driver's license, they should not drive until all their symptoms have resolved (at least 24 hours), or they have been cleared by a medical professional to do so.
- If possible, avoid air travel during your recovery.

Most children/teenagers fully recover from concussion within 4 weeks. However, some experience concussion symptoms for longer than expected. See your doctor if a child/teenager continues to experience ongoing symptoms as a referral to one of a range of specialists may be required. A graded return to activities such as school, sports and other activities is recommended, and can help the recovery process.

Return to School and Sport

Inform the school/place of education about the concussion. If required, collaborate to create a Return to Learn plan and/or to help make special accommodations.

These may include allowing rest breaks, reducing the number of contact hours and the amount of homework, rescheduling tests/assignments, providing a quiet learning environment and not participating in Physical Education classes.

Children/teenagers should not return to full participation in sport if they are still experiencing symptoms. Return to sport and physical activity should follow a graded approach. Check with the school, individual sporting club or national sporting code for their concussion guidelines or protocols. Speak to your doctor about getting a Return to Sport plan if required.

More information

Connectivity Traumatic Brain Injury Australia is an Australia-wide not-for-profit organisation working to raise awareness of concussion and traumatic brain injury in the community. For more information on concussion, speak to your doctor, healthcare professional, or visit the Connectivity website at www.connectivity.org.au



Disclaimer: This flyer and the Connectivity website does not offer medical advice for individuals. If you have suffered a concussion, please seek medical advice.