Caring for your child after a concussion

Concussion

A concussion is a type of brain injury that affects how the brain works.

It causes changes in the brain that may not be seen in a CT scan or X-ray.

A concussion may be caused by a blow to the head, face, neck or body. Loss of consciousness may occur.

A concussion may affect balance, reaction time and the way a person thinks and remembers.

Symptoms

Common symptoms:

- ❒ Sleep disturbances
- ❒ Headache
- ❒ Nausea and vomiting
- ❒ Poor balance or coordination
- ❒ Dizziness
- ❒ Visual problems
- ❒ Sensitivity to light or noise
- ❒ Mental ‘fogginess’
- ❒ Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- ❒ Irritability
- ❒ Sadness
- ❒ Nervousness

Red flag symptoms

If you notice any of the following symptoms, take your child to a hospital Emergency Department right away:

- ❒ Increased drowsiness
- ❒ Worsening headache or neck pain
- ❒ Repeated vomiting
- ❒ Seizures
- ❒ Slurred speech
- ❒ Loss of movement

Recovery

The brain needs time to heal
After a concussion, your child must rest his or her body and mind until all symptoms are gone.

To help your child recover, we recommend that your child:

- Drinks plenty of water to prevent dehydration.
- Has regular snacks and meals.
- Gets lots of rest, with regular times for naps and sleep.
- Limits activities that require concentration, such as playing video games, using the computer, watching TV and playing musical instruments.

The symptoms of concussion usually improve steadily in 10 to 14 days. Sometimes, recovery takes longer.

If your child's symptoms do not improve within 2 weeks, see your family doctor or health care provider for assessment and referral to a specialist.

Returning to activities

Your child must completely recover before returning to activities.
If your child continues to play when he or she has symptoms, recovery will take longer. Getting another concussion while the brain is healing can be very dangerous!

When your child is symptom free, follow CanChild's guidelines to plan your child's gradual return to activity and school.

- Returning to activity guidelines for children and youth http://canchild.ca/en/ourresearch/resources/MTBI-Return_to_Activity_Brochure.pdf
- Returning to school guidelines for children and youth http://canchild.ca/en/ourresearch/resources/MTBI-Return_to_School_Brochure.pdf

Carefully inspect your child's protective head gear before it is used again. Replace it if there is any damage.

Remind your child:

"Wearing a helmet can reduce the severity of brain injuries, but doesn't make you invincible!

Be safe and have fun!"

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