SUPPORTING A CHILD/adolescent WITH CONCUSSION: 
Your role as a parent

Helping children and adolescents with their concussion care and returning to school, play, sport and daily life activities requires the support of many. As a parent, you have an important role to play! If your child/adolescent has never had a concussion, use this information to build your knowledge. For parents whose child/adolescent has had a concussion, use this information to advocate for the care and support your child/adolescent may need.

About this resource: The information in this resource is based on the Living Guideline for Diagnosing and Managing Pediatric Concussion. Parent experience in concussion informed the development of this resource, which involved reviewing and selecting recommendations from this Guideline that families should be aware of.

EDUCATION: Know about concussion

- A concussion is a brain injury caused by sudden shaking of the head. Any hit to the head, face, neck or body can cause a concussion. Concussions can happen from a fall, during a motor vehicle collision or sports, or during play at school, camp or in the neighbourhood.
- If the child/adolescent has a significant impact to the head, face, neck, or body and reports any symptoms or shows any of the visual signs of a concussion, you should suspect a concussion.

Concussion symptoms: Symptoms describe how someone feels after they are injured. Some symptoms may not appear until the next day. Common concussion symptoms your child/adolescent may experience are:

- Headaches or head pressure
- Blurred or fuzzy vision
- Dizziness
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Nausea and vomiting
- Balance problems
- Easily upset or angered
- Feeling upset or emotional
- Nervous or anxious
- Sadness
- Sleeping more or less
- Having a hard time falling asleep
- Feeling slow, tired or having no energy
- Difficulty working on a computer
- Not thinking clearly
- Difficulty reading or remembering

Take action: Know the school and sports organization’s role in concussion!

Enquire if your child/adolescent's school or sports organization has a concussion policy/protocol and refer to it. Determine if:

- concussion education is provided
- staff are oriented to the policies/protocols
- policies/protocols are reviewed and updated regularly

If the school or sports organization does not have a concussion policy/protocol, talk to the administration about putting one in place.

Take action:

If anyone (e.g. school teacher, coach) suspects that your child/adolescent has a concussion, take your child/adolescent to a physician or nurse practitioner right away to confirm the diagnosis of concussion. Ask them for information on:

- strategies to promote concussion recovery
- length of concussion recovery
- steps to take to return-to-school, sport and play
- communicating concussion recovery needs and required supports to the school and/or coach (e.g. letter)

It is important that your child/adolescent's healthcare team (e.g. physician) uses the guideline to inform concussion care. Ask if they are aware of the guideline. Refer them to: www.braininjuryguidelines.org.
CONCUSSION RECOVERY: Understand the steps involved

• Rest for the first 1-2 days after a concussion is key!
• After this short rest, your child/adolescent should start activities (physical and thinking) that do not:
  • make symptoms worse
  • bring on new symptoms
  • increase the risk of a fall or hit to the head or body that could cause another concussion
  • increase the risk for another concussion (e.g. contact sport, full game play)

Take action:
Every child/adolescent’s experience with concussion is different. If you’re not sure what your child/adolescent can do during the recovery process, ask the medical doctor or nurse practitioner. Things you may want to ask about are:
  - Importance of sleep
  - Driving safety
  - Maintaining social interactions
  - Avoidance of alcohol and recreational drugs
  - Use of computers, phones and screen devices, and if these make symptoms worse
  - Use of over-the-counter medications for headaches

Returning to school and sport
• Teachers and coaches can play an active role in supporting your child/adolescent with a concussion to make a gradual and individualized (step-by-step) return-to-school and sport. Here are the different steps that you and your child/adolescent can follow:

Return-to-School Steps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps*</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Activities at home that do not make the child/adolescent feel worse</td>
<td>Reading, texting, screen time and other activities that do not make symptoms worse Start at 5-15 minutes at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>School activities</td>
<td>Homework, reading or other activities outside of the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Return-to-school part-time</td>
<td>Getting back to school for a few hours or half days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Return-to-school full-time</td>
<td>Gradual return to full days at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Return-to-Activity/Sport/Play Steps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps*</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Physical and cognitive activities that do not make the child/adolescent feel worse</td>
<td>Walking at home or in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Light physical activity</td>
<td>Jogging or stationary cycling at slow to medium speed. No weight training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sport-specific exercise</td>
<td>Running or skating drills. No drills with risk of head injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Non-contact activities</td>
<td>Practice without body contact. Gym class activities without risk of head injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Full-contact activities</td>
<td>Full activities/sports practices after doing full-time school and getting a medical doctor’s note that states the child/adolescent is cleared to return to full-contact sport or high-risk activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Return to all activities and sports</td>
<td>Normal full-contact game play</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Your child/adolescent can start these steps 1-2 days after a concussion, even with symptoms. Each step should take about one day. If symptoms get worse, the child/adolescent should go back to the last step. Try it again until the child/adolescent can do it without bringing on new symptoms or making symptoms worse. It is important to receive a note from the medical doctor or nurse practitioner that states the child/adolescent is cleared to return to full-contact sport or high-risk activity.

Take action:
Work with your child/adolescent’s teacher and school to help put these steps into practice. Your child/adolescent’s healthcare provider can advise on what supports might be needed in the classroom to help with return-to-school such as:
  - Environment supports (e.g. alternate workspace, reducing noise, rest breaks)
  - Instruction supports (e.g. extra help, alternatives for screen-based instruction)
  - Assessment and Evaluation supports (e.g. extra time for tests, quiet workspace for test taking)
Supporting a child/adolescent with concussion: Your role as a parent

Living Guideline for Diagnosing and Managing Pediatric Concussion

- Returning to sport too soon after a concussion can lead to another injury, resulting in worse symptoms that last longer or a more severe brain injury.
- If you notice that your child/adolescent is developing new concussion-like symptoms or sustains a new suspected concussion, take them to a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Having ongoing conversations about concussion symptoms, medical management and recovery are important so that you can best support your child/adolescent through the concussion recovery process.
- Concussion recovery takes time, so it is important to have patience with your child/adolescent during this process.

Looking for resources?

Here are examples of resources that might be helpful and that you can share with other parents or your child/adolescent’s teacher or coach:

- Concussion Recognition Tool 5: To help identify concussion in children, adolescents, and adults
- Parachute Concussion Guidelines for Parents & Caregivers
- Concussion Ed – Parachute Concussion Education
- PAR Concussion Recognition & Response : Concussion symptom recognition tool for coaches and parents
- CATT: Concussion Resources for Parents or Caregivers

STAY CONNECTED: Communicate with your child/adolescent, their teacher, coach and healthcare provider