



Back to School after a Head Injury

Parent/Caregiver Information—Paediatric Occupational Therapy



Children & Head Injury

For a time after an injury to the head, some children experience concussion.

They may lose consciousness and/or experience other symptoms like headaches, dizziness and nausea.

Concussion occurs when the brain has been injured. As the brain recovers this can disturb children's normal physical, emotional and behavioural patterns and also cognitive (thinking).

Most children will recover from concussion within two weeks. Some children however will experience symptoms for weeks or months after the injury.

All Head injuries are different !!

Children will experience and recover from head injuries differently.

This pamphlet contains information about returning to school and some of the possible symptoms children experience after a head injury.



Physical Symptoms

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Double/Blurred vision
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Speech changes
- Clumsiness
- Changes in eating /sleeping patterns
- Seizures
- Blank looks

Behavioural Symptoms

- Mood changes
- Personality changes
- Frustration
- Restlessness
- Difficulty interacting with others
- Lack of initiative

Cognitive Symptoms

- Decreased concentration
- Memory difficulties
- Difficulty staying on task

Returning to school

When physical symptoms have cleared children may be ready to return to school. School should be commenced on a part-time basis initially (eg: half days).

Classrooms are very busy environments!

There is a lot to see, hear and do. This can be challenging for children while they are recovering from concussion.

While symptomatic children need to limit over-exertion of daily living activities, physical and cognitive (thinking) stressors eg: School, text messaging, computer and play station games.

You may notice children will have an increase in symptoms they experience at some point during the day – this is the brain's way of saying **"I need a rest !"**. It is important to make a plan for children to return home from school or at least find a quiet place if/when this happens.

When both teacher and parent are satisfied that the child is coping, time at school can be increased. It should be anticipated that children should be able to fully attend within two-four weeks after the injury.

A few children will take longer to recover. It is beneficial to get some advice from the hospital in this case.

Physical Activity

After a head injury, children are required to avoid activity with a high potential for further injury to the head for **6 weeks** (or longer if symptoms have not resolved).

This includes activities such as Physical Education, contact sport and other vigorous activity.

It is important to avoid further head injury as cumulative head injuries can lead to long term damage

If you have any concerns or want more information contact



Occupational Therapy Services

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Reference: Brain Injury Association NZ : *Understanding brain injury*



For more information about:

- your health and medication, go to www.healthinfo.org.nz
- hospital and specialist services, go to www.cdhb.health.nz

