

Concussion in Children

This leaflet gives information about concussion. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your child's care.

What is concussion and why have has my child got it?

Concussion is a temporary brain injury caused by either a direct bump to the head or to the body which results in your head jolting back and forwards. This causes your brain to move a little inside your skull and cause some injury. It's a very common injury that nearly one in four people has experienced. Most people will feel better within a couple of weeks. The reason it's important to monitor is in some people it can cause future problems with memory, speech, concentration, coordination, hearing and sight.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Signs and symptoms generally start straight after the injury but some don't emerge until a few hours or days later. Therefore it is important to keep an eye on your child. Things to look out for are:

- Headache
- Nausea and vomiting
- Dizzy or blurred vision
- Sensitive to light and noises
- Cannot tell you about the events from before or after the injury
- Appears dazed / stunned
- Clumsiness
- Loss of consciousness (even briefly)
- Mood or behaviour changes.

A responsible adult should stay for the first 24 hours after the injury to monitor for any of these symptoms.

You should seek medical advice if your child has any of these symptoms.

If, following initial review, these symptoms are still present two weeks after the injury, please make an appointment to see your GP.

Do I need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

A diagnosis of a concussion is a clinical one. The doctor will ask lots of questions to understand how the injury happened and check for any signs that they are worried about. They will then examine your child to check for visible bumps and bruises, any

drowsiness, check how well they can move their neck and test the nerves supplying the body still work normally.

If there are any concerning features, then your child may have a scan of their head. This is to exclude a more serious injury rather than to diagnose a concussion.

What treatments are available and what can I do to help myself?

Most people will make a full recovery from a concussion in a few days or weeks.

There are no specific treatments for a concussion, more so the emphasis is on monitoring for development of worsening symptoms and managing the current ones.

Top tips on helping your child with a concussion:

- Paracetamol (Calpol) for pain relief
- Avoid screens
- Complete rest. This should be for 24-48 hours after the injury
- Avoid stress and brain-stimulating activities; speak to your child's school regarding upcoming tests / homework load so that special considerations can be made
- Avoid contact sports, or when returning to sports ensure this is in a supported and phased return:
 - Alert the school and PE teacher to the concussion
 - Return to sport can start once two weeks symptom free
 - Do not play contact sports for three weeks
 - Should symptoms return then stop sport and seek advice from GP.

What happens if my child does not get treatment / concussion isn't recognised?

Children's brains are still developing so there is more of a concern on the impact that a concussion can have. Early recognition and a diagnosis of concussion helps to protect any worsening of the injury. It means things can be put in place to protect them from a second or repeated head injuries.

If a concussion is missed and there is a second injury to the head before your child has had time to recover, then this may prolong their symptoms. In more serious cases it may lead to long-term memory problems.

When to seek help

There are a few rare, but serious, complications associated with concussion. It is important to be aware of the signs of these to be able to seek help if necessary. You should see a doctor if your child:

- Develops severe headaches

- Vomiting
- Drowsiness
- Has problems with balance or walking
- Experiences increasing confusion.

Returning to Sport

Repeated head injury during recovery from concussion can cause long term damage to a child's brain. Expect your child to stay off sport until at least two weeks after symptoms are fully recovered. Always discuss with your child's school and sports club to discuss a gradual return to full activity.

For more information on returning to sport



Rugby:
[Age Grade Schools and Colleges \(englandrugby.com\)](http://englandrugby.com)



Football:
[FA Concussion Guidelines - If in doubt, sit them out \(thefa.com\)](http://thefa.com)

Further Information

For more information on minor head injuries and concussion

- The Child Brain Injury Trust Website - [Home - Child Brain Injury Trust](#)
- The Children's Trust – [Concussion in children and young people | The Children's Trust \(thechildrenstrust.org.uk\)](#)

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Emergency Department on 020 8725 2666 and ask to be put through to the Paediatric Emergency Department.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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