

After the Injury: Helping My Child Cope

www.aftertheinjury.org

Six ways you can help your child after an injury.

- 1 Let your children know they are safe.** Give them extra hugs (even your teens).
- 2 Allow children to talk about their feelings and worries, if they want to.** Let them know that being a little scared and upset is normal. *If they don't want to talk*, they could write a story or draw a picture.
- 3 Go back to everyday routines.** Help your child get enough sleep, eat regularly, keep up with school, and – as much as the injury allows – go back to doing things with friends.
- 4 Increase time with family and friends.** Children who get extra support from family and friends seem to do better after upsetting events. Try reading, playing games or watching a movie together.

- 5 Take time to deal with your own feelings.** It will be harder to help your child if you are worried or upset. Talk about your feelings with other adults, such as family, friends, clergy, your doctor, or a counselor.
- 6 Keep in mind that people in the same family can react in different ways.** Remember, your child's feelings and worries about the injury might be different from yours. Brothers and sisters can feel upset too, even if they were not involved.

What should I expect after an injury?

In the first few days after an injury, your child might feel confused, upset, jumpy or worried. This is normal. Most children just need a little extra time to feel better.

When and where should I get help for my child?

Your child might need extra help if he or she:

- is still upset, jumpy or worried a few weeks after the injury,
- is doing worse in school or not wanting to go to school at all,
- is dropping out of things he or she used to enjoy.

Talk to your child's doctor or school counselor to find out the best way to help your child and family if you are worried about your child's reactions.



Things other parents have found helpful.

YOUNGER CHILDREN:



"You're safe now."



"Why don't you draw a picture about your time in the hospital."

Do: Allow your child to talk about what happened, if he or she wants to.

Say: *"A lot has happened. Is there anything you're worried or confused about?"*

Do: If your child doesn't want to talk about what happened, encourage him or her to draw a picture or write a story about it.

Say: *(To younger children) "Can you draw a picture about what happened and tell me a story about it?"*

(To teenage children) "Can you write a story about what happened and how you're feeling?"

Do: Keep in mind that brothers and sisters could also feel upset or worried.

Say: *"How are you doing? Is there anything you are worried about?"*

Do: Maintain your child's regular meal and bed times. If sleep is a problem for your child, try a bedtime story and a favorite stuffed animal for younger children, some quiet time and relaxing music for teens.

Say: *(To younger children) "Let's read your favorite book before going to bed."*

(To teenage children) "How about listening to music that helps you relax?"

Do: Talk to another adult if you are feeling upset about what happened to your child.

Say: *"I'm feeling a little overwhelmed. It would help to have someone to talk to."*

OLDER CHILDREN:



"You can still spend time with your friends."



"When I'm upset, I find someone to talk to."



CPTS

Center for Pediatric Traumatic Stress
The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

www.chop.edu/cpts

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsn.org



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