

## Let's Talk About...

# Safety After Brain Injury

It is very important to keep your child safe after a brain injury. This is so he will recover well. For the first few weeks after the injury, your child's brain will work very hard to heal. If your child hits his head during this time, it can cause more injury and delay healing. Also, multiple brain injuries, or concussions, can combine. This may cause life-long thinking and memory difficulties. These are hard to recover from.

### Why is my child at risk for more injury now?

- Your child's brain is more sensitive to injury now, so even a small hit to their head can be harmful.
- Your child may be more impulsive (does not think before he acts) and may get into dangerous situations more easily.
- Your child's balance may be off and he may fall more easily.
- Poor social skills are common after a brain injury. This can cause your child to get into fights or be taken advantage of.

### Why does my child need more supervision now?

You will have to supervise your child more closely now because he may:

- Have poor judgment and need help making safe decisions
- Need help to relearn or practice good social skills
- Need guidance and supervision to make good choices

- Forget activity restrictions
- Be taken advantage of or not be able to handle peer pressure

### How can I protect my child and help prevent further injuries?

- Do not let your child participate in impact sports or high speed activities until your doctor "clears" your child. He should keep "two feet on the ground" at all times.
- Establish clear rules. Help your child recognize the consequences of his actions.
- Have your child avoid situations that may be dangerous. For example, drive your child to school instead of having him cross busy streets. Do not leave guns, knives, or unsafe tools around the house.
- Use positive reminders. For example, say "please walk" instead of "don't run."
- Praise and provide attention to good and appropriate behaviors.
- Have a buddy system to help your child get to school, navigate between classes, and at other times.
- Ensure rest times at home and school. It is harder for your child to make good decisions when he is mentally or physically tired or overwhelmed.
- Have your child play with friends at your house so you can give them reliable supervision.
- Consider providing your child with an aide at school.
- Make an emergency plan with your child for situations where he feels agitated or unsafe.

- Do not allow your teenager to drive until his doctor says it is ok.
- Always use the right car restraint (car seat, booster, seatbelt).
- Always make sure your child wears a helmet when he has activities that could cause further brain injury (for example biking, horse-back riding, skating, boarding, and skiing).

## How can I help my child make good choices?

- Role-play situations with your child so he can practice making good choices.
- Talk to your child’s babysitters, day care, teachers, and coaches about his brain injury and how to help your child be safe and succeed.
- Post signs around the house with reminders to turn off the stove, unplug the iron, or turn off the water.
- Talk to your child’s siblings and friends and teach them how to help your child.

## What are some activities my child can do while he heals?

- Read books
- Do schoolwork
- Do puzzles, Sudoku, or other brain teasers
- Walk or hike
- Do strength training: squats, lunges, sit-ups
- Yoga
- Play golf
- Snowshoe
- Swim laps (no horse play, jumping, or diving)
- Play card games
- Do memory games
- Plant a garden
- Learn a musical instrument

## Remember, you only get one brain, keep it safe!

The most important thing you can do for your child after a brain injury is keep him safe and protect his brain from more injury.