

Returning to school after a trauma



When a child experiences a trauma, many children and families worry about the child returning to school. This teaching sheet covers how to help your child have a successful return to school.

- Return to your normal routine. This can be very helpful for your child after a trauma.
 - Try to have your child return to school as soon as they are ready.
 - It can be hard to know when your child will be ready to return to school. Talk with your child's doctor to find out when your child should be physically ready to return.
- Talk with your child. They may be physically ready to return to school but may not seem emotionally ready. Talk with them about it! Many children have worries and fears about returning to school after a trauma.
 - Remind your child that many children have worries and fears about returning to school.
 - Talk with your child about their worries and fears. Come up with solutions for them.
- Consider meeting with your child's teacher before your child returns to school. This is so you can answer their questions and give them more information.
 - You may give your child's teacher a copy of the Children's teaching sheet called "How Teachers Can Support Students After Trauma."
- You and your child may talk with their class.
 - Explain why your child has missed school and what happened.
 - You may give the class a simple version such as, "Sarah was in a car accident and hurt her arm and leg. Sarah missed school because she was at the hospital getting better. Now she is back at school, but she will have a cast on her arm and leg for a while until her body is all the way better."
 - After this, let the class ask questions. You can answer or your child can answer.
- Your child may be worried about how their class will react to their absence or change in how they look. Role-play situations with your child to help them practice their reactions and responses. It can be helpful for your child to have a "standard answer" to use if they are not sure how to respond.
- Encourage your child to try their best. Help them with homework and classwork if needed.
- If you have questions or need additional help with this transition, contact your child's teacher, school counselor or doctor. You can also reach out to the child life specialist that was helping your child in the hospital.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.