

When Your Child Has a Brain Injury

The dedicated rehabilitation team at Children's helps your child get back to what's important – to play, work, learn and grow.

YOUR CHILD'S BRAIN AND BRAIN INJURIES

How the brain works

Your child's brain controls how his body works. The brain is made of millions of special nerve cells. Each area of your child's brain performs certain duties or functions. Your child's brain controls what he thinks, how he moves and his memory.

Brain injury and trauma

Trauma can be caused by a hit on the head or shaking of an infant or small child. During a trauma, a child's face or skull may be injured. There may also be broken bones or damage to organs such as the kidneys, liver or spleen.

Brain injury conditions

- Swelling or inflammation of the brain (encephalitis)
- Infection of the fluid and material around the brain and spinal cord (meningitis)
- Lack of blood flow to the brain (ischemic)
- Lack of oxygen to the brain (hypoxic)

Signs of a brain injury

- Unusual behavior
- Confusion
- Agitation or mood swings
- Weakness in any part of the body
- Changes in how your child swallows, talks, walks, or controls his bowel and bladder

How doctors check your child's brain injury

- Medical tests tell doctors the severity or damage caused by your child's injury.
- Doctors use the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS) to check how your child reacts to certain activities. Doctors test:
 - Eye opening
 - Ability to move
 - Verbal response (how your child speaks)
- The doctor gives your child a score from 3 to 15.
 - 13 to 15 – mild injury
 - 9 to 12 – moderate injury
 - 3 to 8 – severe injury

RECOVERY

How does my child's brain heal after an injury?

- Your child's brain does not heal in the same way as a cut or broken bone.
- After an injury, a child's brain may not be able to make new brain cells. Some areas of your child's brain may heal faster than others. Brain nerve cells may continue to heal months after injury.

How long does it take for my child to recover from a brain injury?

- Every child recovers differently. It is important not to compare your child's recovery to another child's.
- It is important to focus on your child's improvements in daily activities.

How do you measure my child's success in recovery?

Doctors measure recovery based on your child's response to tests. One way to measure his recovery is with the Rancho Los Amigos Scale. This rates your child's cognition. Cognition is the brain's ability to process and react to information. Your child's injury may affect his cognition.

The Rancho Los Amigos Scale

- Doctors use a scale from 1 to 10 to check your child's ability to react to his surroundings.
- At Level 1, a child is unable to perform daily activities.
- At Level 10, a child can do a lot of things on his own.

As my child's caregiver, what can I do to help his recovery?

- Keep a positive attitude.
 - Recognize the life-altering effects of a brain injury without losing hope of recovery.
- Take care of yourself and your family.
 - Recovery may be a lengthy process. You may experience physical, medical, and emotional highs and lows.
- Get help from friends and family.
 - Ask for support from family members, counselors and members of a social circle (friends, church or co-workers).
- Stay informed about your child's condition.
 - Ask your child's doctor to explain his medical tests.
 - Write down questions to ask the doctor.
 - Staying informed will reduce stress on you and your family.

REHABILITATION

What role does rehabilitation play in my child's recovery?

- Rehabilitation is an important part of your child's recovery.
- Your child's rehabilitation will help him regain the skills he needs to go home.
- Working with a skilled healthcare professional is important for your child to regain his independence and help your family learn about his condition.

What do I look for to make sure my child receives the best rehabilitation care?

- A program that looks at your child's age to plan his recovery. This helps your child receive the best care.
- A program that is accredited by the Commission for the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

- A program that has direct access to a children's hospital in case your child needs emergency medical care.
- Specially trained staff who know how to treat your child's condition.
- A range of services, including: rehabilitation medicine, rehabilitation nursing, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, music therapy, therapeutic recreation, counseling, staff chaplains, certified teachers, respiratory care, social work and case management.

THE CHILDREN'S INPATIENT REHABILITATION PROGRAM

- The only pediatric hospital in the Southeast accredited by CARF for inpatient pediatric and adolescent brain injury rehabilitation.
- Rehabilitation services available seven days a week for children and adolescents, ages birth to 21 years old.
- Family-centered care, including private rooms so that you can stay with your child.
- No limits on parent visits. You can stay for education and participate in your child's rehabilitation and recovery.
- A full-time, certified teacher, music therapist, child life specialist and case manager specializing in your child's needs after a trauma.
- A psychosocial team that includes a neuropsychologist, social worker and chaplain.
- Weekly support groups for parents, siblings and families.
- Weekly community outings to prepare your child for real-life situations.
- Our doctors are specially trained to treat children and adolescents with special needs.
- Special treatment programs ensure that your child's rehabilitation is successful.

For more information, call Rehabilitation Services at Children's at 404-785-7224 or the national pager at 800-399-2380. For general information, visit the Children's Web site at www.choa.org/rehabilitation.

The Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Board of Trustees recognizes the organization's responsibility to patients, staff, physicians and the community we serve and is dedicated to the principle that all patients, employees, physicians and visitors be treated in an ethical manner with respect, dignity and courtesy.