Returning Home After Brain Injury

You and your child have worked hard during the hospital stay. Going home can bring new challenges. To support a smooth transition, here are some helpful tips.

Relationships

A brain injury can change how your child acts, thinks, appears, feels, and looks. It can also change how they interact with others. This can make it hard to connect with friends and family.

Family

Life at home may be different after your child's brain injury. Parents may need to spend more time taking care of their child.

Their siblings may feel unsure about how to act. They may feel ignored or jealous because their sibling gets more attention. Encourage your family to share their feelings without placing guilt or blame.

Friendships

A brain injury may impact your child's friendships. Friends might feel unsure or nervous about what to say or do. Take time to explain what a brain injury is and how it affects your child. This helps their friends feel comfortable and better able to support their friend.

Romantic Relationships

Romantic relationships are a normal part of growing up. A brain injury may change how your child shows love and affection. They may not understand when it is okay to touch, hug, or kiss others.

Your child may struggle making choices about sex. It is important to talk about sex to keep your child safe from emotional and physical harm.

Activity Restrictions

Your child's safety is important. There may be activities your child did before that isn't safe now. Please follow all activity restrictions advised by your child's care team.

Physical Activity

When cleared to return to sports, your child must wear a well-fitted helmet. Discuss outdoor activities with your child's care team before starting.

Driving

Your child should always wear a seatbelt or use a car seat or booster if needed.

Before your child can drive, they must talk with their doctor. The doctor may suggest more testing with an occupational therapist.

Substance Use

Your child should avoid alcohol or other drugs. This can worsen the effects of a brain injury.

Home Safety Tips

Routine

Use reminders or checklists around the home to help your child stay on track. Keep the day as structured as possible.

Supervision

Watch your child when:

- In the kitchen
- Outdoors to make sure they don't wander or get lost.
- Near water, such as pools or lakes.

Hazards

- Check your home for fire hazards.
- Make sure smoke detectors are working and you have a fire safety plan.
- Remove throw rugs and other items that can cause tripping.
- Be careful around radiators and heaters to prevent burns.
- Set your water heater to 120 degrees or lower to avoid burns.
- Store these items where your child can't reach them.:
    - Sharp kitchen utensils.
    - Household cleaning supplies.
    - Car keys or keys to heavy machinery.
    - Medicine bottles (with labels).
    - Lawn and garden tools and outdoor chemicals.
    - Weapons (guns, knives).
    - Alcohol or other substances.

When to Call

You are not alone. Call your care team for support and resources.

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your referring provider through MyChart or call your referring provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit www.uwhealth.org/.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 12/2025 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF# 8464