

## **Helping Your Child Cope after an Injury**

### **How injuries change a child**

Children have many different responses after an injury. You may notice changes in your child. These changes are normal and are often temporary. You can help your child work through the changes.

### **What are common responses?**

After an injury, your child may:

- Cling to you.
- Worry more fear being away from you.
- Have problems falling or staying asleep.
- Have nightmares.
- Act younger than their age.
- Complain of stomach aches or headaches.
- Have flashbacks of what happened.
- Feel guilty or blame someone else.
- Eat too much or too little.
- Be anxious or very shy.
- Show little interest in favorite activities.
- Have trouble concentrating in school.
- Avoid being in big groups.

### **What are some things that may help?**

#### **1. Help your child feel safe**

- Talk openly about fears.
- Say calming and encouraging things.
- Put a night light in the bedroom.
- Have comfort items such as a favorite blanket or stuffed animal for younger children.
- Have people your child knows and trusts care for them.

#### **2. Help your child work through what has happened**

- When they bring it up, talk to your child about what happened. Talk about how they remember what happened.
- Be honest. Use words your child can understand.
- Have your child draw pictures or use toys to express how they feel.

#### **3. Help your child return to normal activities**

- Have regular meal and sleep times.
- Slowly add more choices. Have your child help plan meals, dress, activities, etc.
- Be supportive and patient.
- Teach your child how to be safe in the future.

## **It takes time**

The responses you see are your child's way of working through the injury. Your child should be able to return to a normal routine within a short period of time. If you are concerned about your child's recovery, tell a member of your child's health care team.

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**