

New Rules to Protect Your Kid's Noggin

Children bonk their head all the time when they're wrestling with siblings, playing soccer, and just being clumsy—and it's easy to worry that a bump could turn into something bigger. After all, more than 800,000 kids in the U.S. get a concussion every year. For the first time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has released specific "return to learn" and "return to play" guidelines for head injuries, based on 25 years of research. One doctor shares the big takeaways.

→ **ALWAYS** take any injury beyond a light head bump seriously. A concussion occurs when a bump, blow, or jolt to the head or a hit to the body makes the brain bounce or twist in the skull. This creates chemical changes and can sometimes damage brain cells. "If your child complains of a headache or dizziness, is nauseous or vomiting, appears dazed, or sleeps more or less than usual, it's time to get a doctor's evaluation," says Dennis Cardone, D.O., associate professor of orthopedic surgery and pediatrics and codirector of the NYU Langone Concussion



Center. Even toddlers can get a concussion from a tumble, so look for changes

in their behavior such as not wanting to nurse or eat or losing interest in toys.

If diagnosed with a concussion, your child will need mental rest, says Dr. Cardone. That means taking a break from all activities for two to three days, and after that, starting with light aerobic activity. He may need to attend school for only half the day or do little to no homework (he won't mind this rule!). However, he shouldn't return to any sports or strenuous activities that have a high risk of falling or contact (think: field hockey, gymnastics, climbing a tree) until he's been cleared by his doctor, which should be within a few weeks.



FIRE-SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE TODAY

Forty years ago, you might have had 17 minutes to escape from your house safely during a fire.

Today, because of the evolution of home furnishings, open layouts, and construction materials, that time has drastically shrunk to just three minutes or less. **May 4 is National Wildfire Community Preparedness Day**, and while you may not live near a forest, you can still take steps to prevent a fire from happening in or around your home. Consider these tips from the National Fire Protection Association to keep your family safe.

Pay attention in the kitchen.

We understand that dinnertime isn't just you tending to a pot—you may be helping with homework, loading the dishwasher, and spooning a puree into a little one's mouth. But know this: Unattended cooking is the leading cause of kitchen fires. If you have to leave the stove even for a minute, turn it off. And if you're one to forget something in the oven, carry a wooden spoon with you as a reminder. Tell your kid that if he sees you with it, he can ask if you took the food out already. You can also say, "Alexa, set a timer for dinner for 30 minutes." Or give your child that task.

Clean up outdoors.

About 80 percent of home destruction during wildfires is caused by embers that fly on the wind (sometimes up to a mile away from the main fire), land on flat surfaces, and ignite anything that can burn. Inspect the 5-foot perimeter around your home: Clear debris from the roof, gutters, and vents; move flammable materials away from exterior walls; and install wire mesh over vent openings or the area under a deck to prevent leaves from collecting.

If you have shrubs or trees within that perimeter, make sure the plants are well

watered and trimmed away from the side of the house. Remove any needles or leaves that have dropped beneath or are stuck in the branches. Gravel or crushed stone placed around your landscaping can help stifle fallen embers. Get your child to pitch in too! With her little hands and eagle eyes, she can collect pine needles, dead plants, and sticks; sweep the deck; and hunt for gaps or holes in your siding or screens.

Check out heat sources.

You might not be thinking about your home's heating equipment right now, but it's another main source of home fires. Before cold days return, have a professional inspect and clean yours.

Close before you doze.

At night, get in the habit of shutting bedroom doors, which may slow the spread of smoke, heat, and fire. A study by UL Firefighter Safety Research Institute found that this can also create an effective barrier against deadly levels of carbon monoxide. Install interconnected smoke alarms inside and outside the bedrooms so that when one sounds, they all do.