

The Emotional Impact of Pediatric Injury

Helping Families Recover



Beyond the physical trauma, childhood injuries can powerfully affect families' emotions. To help them cope, the Center for Injury Research and Prevention formed the Child and Adolescent Reaction to Injury and Trauma (CARIT) Research Program. CARIT is devoted to understanding and addressing the range of responses that children and families experience after pediatric injury.

This comprehensive research program focuses on:

- documenting the prevalence of acute and longer-term post-traumatic distress related to pediatric injury
- understanding risk and resilience factors that affect emotional recovery after injury
- creating valid measures for acute stress symptoms in children and youth
- developing practical and valid screening tools to help medical providers identify children and parents at risk
- creating effective preventive intervention methods to reduce post-traumatic stress after injury

Research

Our studies have found that injured children and their parents can be susceptible to psychological distress disorders, such as Acute Stress Disorder (ASD) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In a series of prospective studies of children's and parents' reactions to unintentional injuries and interpersonal violence, we have found that many people experience some significant acute stress symptoms within the first month after injury. Six months later, one in six children and parents still has clinically significant traumatic stress symptoms. These studies also identify risk and resilience factors and provide a solid scientific foundation to develop effective preventive interventions for emotional distress after injury.

Beyond the physical trauma,
childhood injuries can powerfully
affect families' emotions.



Action

The Center's researchers have developed screening tools and intervention methods to promote emotional recovery and are creating and testing ways to integrate these methods into medical treatment.

• Information for parents, children and healthcare providers

The CARIT research program has translated its findings into practical tips and informational handouts for parents, children and pediatricians. To download copies of these materials, visit the Center Web site at www.chop.edu/injury.

• Screening and intervention to reduce the risk of PTSD after injury

Researchers at the Center have created an evidence-based screening tool to help predict which children are at higher risk for PTSD after being hospitalized for an injury. The researchers are testing practical preventive interventions for recently injured children and their parents, including Web-based resources for parents and brief interventions that can be integrated into hospital trauma care. For detailed information on these interventions, visit the Center Web site at www.chop.edu/injury.

Collaborations and Related Projects

The Center's behavioral science researchers collaborate actively with colleagues at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and The University of Pennsylvania, including CHOP's Trauma Program, Emergency Department and Center for Pediatric Traumatic Stress, and the Firearm and Injury Center at Penn.

More details are available at www.chop.edu/injury.