

# TRANSCENDENT Speaker Series

## Unique Characteristics to Consider in Early Childhood Concussions

### Concussions and young children

Concussions happen quite frequently in young children. The most common cause of concussion for young children is falls in the home or while playing or climbing.



#### Diagnosing concussions in young children

Concussion diagnosis can be difficult to establish in young children compared to older children or adults. Reasons for this can include:

- Physicians might feel unsure about making the diagnosis because of challenges around young children's abilities to communicate concussion signs and symptoms
- Lack of concussion tools and post-concussion measures for young children

### Unique considerations for concussions in young children

Concussions in young children are unique from those in other populations, and because of this, unique approaches to detection, diagnosis and care may be needed. Some things that make these injuries unique in young children include their:

#### Physical development

(poor balance and developing movement skills)

#### Brain development

(rapid brain development and different brain plasticity)

#### Cognition

(not being able to speak or communicate clearly)

#### Family

(parent and child relations)

#### Environment

(home/ daycare)



Many post-concussion symptoms, like balance problems and irritability, are typical of everyday behaviours in young children, which can make it difficult to tell when a concussion has happened. Younger children may also present some unique symptoms (like stomachache) or behaviours (like tantrums, mood changes, or comfort-seeking) that aren't seen in older children. Specific tools for early childhood concussion can be found on the COCO website ([coco.umontreal.ca/en](http://coco.umontreal.ca/en)). These tools can be used to help detect post-concussion changes in young children.



Note: Parents play a very important role in recognizing and managing concussions in young children, and parental mental state (e.g., stress) can impact their child's outcomes.

#### Some Key Takeaways & Opportunities

- ✓ Concussions in young children are unique and need to be diagnosed and managed accordingly.
- ✓ It is important to observe a young child's behaviour and to note any changes after an injury.
- ✓ There is a need for more research and knowledge sharing around concussions in young children to understand things like their vulnerability for concussions or concussion outcomes.

This information is based on a talk done by TRANSCENDENT team member, Dr. Miriam Beauchamp.