







Notes

You are encouraged to use this page to note symptoms, activities, questions and other comments throughout the recovery process.







UNDERSTANDING CONCUSSIONS

HeadSmart[™] is a recovery protocol developed by physicians and school nurses to facilitate a student's healthy return to school and sports following a concussion. The protocol is designed to engage students — as well as their families, friends, health care providers, teachers and coaches — in the recovery process.

HeadSmart outlines four color-coded stages of recovery that students experience after a concussion. The four stages help to create a common language and understanding among students, family members, friends, school and health professionals throughout the recuperation process.

The HeadSmart handbook is an easy-to-use guide for middle, high school and college age students who have experienced a concussion. It is recommended that students review the handbook with family members, teachers, coaches and school health professionals. Handbook users will find:

- Information about concussions
- Descriptions of the four color-coded stages of recovery
- Resources, programs and additional readings for students, families and teachers

HeadSmart is the outcome of a unique collaboration among Scituate Pediatrics, Scituate High School, and three South Shore Hospital programs: Concussion Management Clinic, Youth Health Connection, and Reading Partnership.

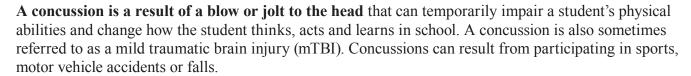
Protocol contributors include two members of South Shore Hospital Staff — Janet Kent, MD, medical director/Concussion Management Clinic; David Morin, MD, Concussion Management Clinic — and school nurse leaders from Braintree, Canton, Framingham, Quincy, Scituate, Walpole and Weymouth.

Handbook reviewers include Barbara J. Green, PhD, medical director/South Shore Hospital Youth Health Connection; Kimberly Noble, RN, MBA, coordinator/South Shore Hospital Youth Health Connection; Marisa Frank, PT, DPT, CSCS, concussion rehabilitation therapist; Marge Rossi, RN, BSN, MEd, school nurse leader/Scituate Public Schools; Mary Kennedy, RN, APRN-BC, CCRN, EMT-P, Trauma Injury Prevention Coordinator; Jean Ciborowski-Fahey, PhD, coordinator/South Shore Hospital Reading Partnership; Melanie Smith, LCSW, Hingham Public School Transition Coordinator.

Reprints of the HeadSmart Concussion Management handbook are permitted. Please visit **southshorehospital.org/head-smart**. Organizations may also link to — or post — the handbook on their websites.

High school teacher: "As a teacher, I greatly appreciate learning the parameters and intricacies of students with concussions. With this new knowledge of color coding student conditions, teachers will be able to develop learning accommodations to successfully transition students back into the classroom."

Concussion 101



How can a concussion affect you?

A concussion may impact a student's academic performance. You may learn more slowly, have trouble remembering things and staying organized, and have a hard time concentrating. The effects of a concussion may interfere with your ability to listen in class, read, take notes, study, complete tests or organize long-term projects.

A concussion may impact a student's physical and emotional well-being. You may experience headaches, nausea and be sensitive to bright lights and noises. You could feel more tired, dizzy or off-balance. Sometimes you may feel more emotional by experiencing feelings of depression, sadness, impulsiveness, aggression, nervousness or anxiety.

Post-concussion life can be frustrating.

When you return to school after a concussion, your needs may be different than before your injury. Your injury happened suddenly and, often, traumatically. Adjusting to school again may be difficult and will take time. It can be frustrating to remember how things were before you got hurt. You'll need to adjust your expectations — and so will your family, friends and teachers.

What seemed simple before now may be challenging.

Often what is most affected by a concussion is a student's speed of processing information. The faster and easier you can do some tasks, the more resources are freed up to perform more complex tasks. Reading is an example of a complex task that requires you to simultaneously recognize, understand and remember the meaning of words and ideas. Taking notes is another complex task that requires you to listen, understand and write words both quickly and accurately.

Strategies to help manage complex tasks are listed on page 9.

Student football player: "Having a concussion is totally frustrating. I hated missing games and thought I should be back on the field with my team. Looking back, I realize that I wasn't thinking right and probably wouldn't have made the right choice."





Recovery from concussion

- Young people recover more slowly than adults.
- You will recover more quickly with the proper balance of rest, physical activity and schoolwork.
- Because you do not want to fall behind in your classes or sports, you may not give your brain and body the necessary time to heal.
- Each concussion is different, and everyone recovers at a different pace. Overall, younger students recover more slowly than older students.

Physical symptoms that may continue during recovery:

- Headache
- Nausea
- · Light and noise sensitivity
- Fatigue, sluggishness
- Dizziness
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Blurred vision
- Reduced/impaired concentration

Changes in emotional well-being during recovery:

- Higher irritability
- Withdrawn
- More defiant
- Inappropriate behavior
- Argumentative
- Inappropriate emotional reactions
- Emotional ups and downs
- Lack of energy
- Easily annoyed/"short fuse"
- Subdued





Recovery



Concussions may cause changes in school performance:

- Slower processing speed
- · Lapses in short-term memory
- Reduced/impaired concentration
- · Slower to learn new concepts
- Shorter attention span
- · More difficulty organizing
- More difficulty completing assignments and studying for tests
- · Slower reading

• Students with pre-existing learning disabilities may experience a greater impact on their academics.

It is important to allow time for recovery to prevent:

Post-Concussion Syndrome: A disorder that may occur after head injury, causing prolonged recovery from concussive symptoms. Symptoms include dizziness, fatigue and headache well after the initial injury. It may be prevented by strict adherence to your recovery plan.

Second Impact Syndrome: A rare but catastrophic occurrence that may lead to severe debilitation or even death. It is believed to be caused by a second injury to the brain before the first injury is fully healed. It may be prevented by immediate removal from play following an impact to the head and strict adherence to your recovery plan.

School nurse: "Over the years I have seen so many students attempting to be in the classroom and back on the field before they were fully recovered from a concussion. Having ImPACT testing has given us a tool to assess the healing progress and individualize a recovery plan. I would never want to go back!"



A true story





Michael's experience

Michael is 15, a high school sophomore. His concussion happened while on a routine practice run with his high school ski team, during the first skiing warm-up run of the day. Michael says, "I remember going up the lift and getting off at the top of the mountain."

"I remember riding to the emergency room, not sure what happened to my equipment. I thought I face-planted on the mountain — that's what some teammates saw me do." Two days after the event, Michael checked out his helmet for the first time and noted it was fractured in back. It is assumed that he fell, hitting the back of his head, then got up to continue skiing, but fell forward instead. This was the only part of the event that he remembered.

"It bothered me at first that I couldn't remember what happened. I remember going on the ski lift and then after the fall being at the base of the mountain — I have never remembered how I fell."

Michael's symptoms included:

- Nausea only immediately after the injury
- Light sensitivity for the first four days
- Headache constant all day long, for about a week
- Dizziness when going downstairs, bending over, lowering his head or changing his position too quickly (such as from sitting to standing).

Michael's school participation after his concussion was challenging. He was out of school for two days (Thursday and Friday, then rested over the weekend). "It helped to rest and be quiet," he says. When he went back to school, he had a headache that was constant all day for the early part of the following week. He found it hard to concentrate or think — and this was very frustrating. Processing math problems was slower, and he had to pace himself when completing homework. He rested during off periods and checked in with the school nurse during the day. "She was my best support," Michael says. "I had midterms two weeks after the fall. I talked with my teachers and just did the best I could."

Michael wants to share some suggestions that he learned from his post-concussion **experience.** "Ask your teachers to lighten your load," he stresses, "and allow more time to complete your work. Advocate for neurocognitive testing, such as ImPACT (see page 13), to assess how your brain is functioning. And make sure that you, your friends, your school team and your parents agree about your treatment plan."

Michael (student): "I had headaches and sensitivity to light for about a week. I had to remember not to bend over to pick anything up, it made me dizzy and brought back my headache."

Treatment



Treatment for a concussion: Rest, followed by gradual re-introduction of activity.

- The rest and recovery process can be a real challenge for you! You will be tempted to be more active than you should be. Remember that you will only heal with rest.
- You and your parents need to learn about the critical importance of balancing rest and activity. Your doctor, school nurse, trainer and physical therapist can guide you.
- Your recovery team includes you, your family, your teachers, school nurse and doctor — and your friends.
 Make sure to include them in the recovery process so they can be a strong support system for you.
- Make sure everyone understands that your injury may be invisible — but it is very serious. A concussion needs to be treated as carefully as any other injury. Follow the doctor's plan exactly.
- Remember the importance of your long-term goal: to protect your brain.
- Be patient when explanations and warnings are repeated to you over and over. Your recovery depends on you!

Parent of a football player: "Having a school concussion protocol already in place for my son was terrific. Everything worked the way it was supposed to. It took pressure off us as parents to have so much support from the school."





RECOVERY: RED STAGE Usually 2-4 days

School attendance: Students typically do not attend school.

For student at home

- Keep strict limits on TV, reading, gaming, cell phone use, texting, face-to-face socializing and computer use.
- No sports or strenuous physical activity.
- Rest, rest, rest and more rest. This means relaxing with minimum noise and low lights.

For parents/guardians

- Enforce strict limits on your child's use of electronics and screen time.
- Use home-school email or phone to inform the school of concussion injury.
- Request the school to assign a contact person ("Team Captain") with whom you may communicate about your child's progress.

For school personnel

• Once the school is informed of the student's concussion, assign a contact person ("Team Captain").

Parent of a hockey player: "The ImPACT testing that was available through the Scituate Public School system was extremely beneficial to my son. His concussion injury was treated seriously by the school staff and his family. He sustained a significant injury that we were not able to see and therefore did not respect until the testing was performed at SPS. He was allowed to heal fully and finish the school year successfully."







RECOVERY: ORANGE STAGE

School attendance: Halfdays.

For student at home

- *Continue to* limit TV, video games, use of computers, cell phones and texting.
- Go to bed early.
- Avoid school bus; don't carry books or heavy backpacks.
- During weekends, allow yourself one hour at a time for videos, TV or computer (two hours total per day).
- Get some exercise daily. Start with walks. Your doctor, trainer, or physical therapist can guide you.

For student at school

- When you first return to class, don't take notes, *just listen*.
- Schedule time to check in with your teachers and talk about how you are handling the course load and to develop a plan.
- Keep current copies of assignments and handouts.
- Be patient with your recovery.
- Half days of school can be in the morning or afternoon. Work with your parents and doctors to find the schedule that works best for you.
- If you feel dizzy with change of classes, ask to leave a few minutes early. Avoid crowded and loud places.
- If you have light sensitivity, ask to sit away from windows. Ask if teachers may turn down classroom lights. If you have trouble concentrating, ask to sit at the front of the class to help reduce distractions.

For parents/guardians

- Maintain communication and advocacy with the school staff, nurse and your child.
- Help create and reinforce a routine for your child.

For school personnel

- Work with assigned Team Captain (e.g., guidance counselor, school psychologist, school nurse, teacher).
- With student, sort missed work assignments, quizzes and tests into three categories:
 - a. Excused does not need to be made up.
 - b. Accountable student is responsible for the assignment but work may be modified. For example, a quiz can be done at home, an essay may be shortened, every other math problem is to be completed. Creativity is essential here.
 - c. Responsible must be completed by the student.
- No tests at this stage.
- Student should attempt homework. Consider assigning reduced load or partial assignments.



- Create an obtainable sleep/wake schedule and avoid naps. Stick to it even on the weekends.
- Be sure to stay hydrated and drink water.
- Eat three healthy meals a day, including snacks.
- Take medications/supplements at the same time every day.
- Be sure to get some physical activity every day.
- A routine creates the best possible environment for your brain to heal.





RECOVERY: YELLOW STAGE

School attendance: Full days.

For student at school

- Schedule time to check in with your teachers and talk about how you are handling the course load. Develop a plan to complete work in a timely manner.
- If symptoms start to flare while you are in class, taking a 2-3 minute restroom or water cooler break may help. Communicate with your teachers about your reasons for taking breaks.
- Complete as much homework as possible in 15-30 min blocks of time rather than all at once.
- Limit yourself to one major test per day. Notify teachers when you have two tests scheduled on any one day to coordinate test completion in a timely manner.
- Immediately communicate with your parents, school nurse and doctor if your symptoms *worsen*.
- Discuss with your parents, school nurse and doctor whether you should perform with band and chorus (due to noise levels).
- Your doctor, trainer or physical therapist may start to increase your physical activity.
- Continue an active conversation with all of your teachers about your school work and create a work calendar to distribute make-up work. Ask your guidance counselor to help create a work calendar to complete make-up work.

For parents/guardians

- Monitor and document symptoms (both physical and emotional).
- Support and reinforce routines for recovery.
- Advise your child, as needed, on time management for schoolwork completion.
- Continue to advocate for your child at school for tutoring, if needed, and extended time to complete work.

For school personnel

- Support the student in making up the most important school work
- Teachers assist student in creating a class-specific calendar to stagger make-up work, balanced with current work.
- If further adjustments are needed, students should meet with guidance counselor to create a master work schedule.
- Consider un-timing tests and administer them in a quiet area.
- Consider a reader and/or a transcriber for tests.
- Use audiobooks for long readings

- Decrease workload if symptoms worsen.
- Limit student to one major test per day.











RECOVERY: GREEN STAGE

School attendance: Full-time.

For student at school:

- Resume your normal activities.
- Continue to work with teachers to complete all scheduled make-up work.
- Return to sports ONLY if cleared by a physician AND you are managing your school work well, using a gradual return to play protocol.
- Self-monitor your physical well-being and report any symptoms, NEVER PLAY THROUGH ANY SYMPTOMS.
- Continue to stick with your routine.

For parents/guardians:

- Continue to observe, monitor and support your child.
- Support return to sports once medically cleared AND full course load is being tolerated well.
- Advocate for tutoring and extended make-up time when necessary.

For school personnel:

- Request tutoring to assist with make-up work if necessary.
- Continue regular teacher meetings until student is completely caught up with work.
- Follow through with work calendar.
- Reinstate the student's sports program IF cleared by his/her physician and IF he/she is keeping up with school work.

Student (cheerleader): "It is hard to describe. It was like I was in another zone. I knew what I should be doing. I just couldn't make my brain do it."

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health requires all MIAA affiliated school athletes to be cleared by a concussion trained physician before returning to play.





Summary: stages of recovery



RECOVERY: RED STAGE Usually lasts 2-4 days

- REST.
- Students typically do not attend school.
- Keep strict limits on TV, reading, gaming, cell phone use, texting, face-to-face socializing and computer use.
- Parent/Guardian: Inform school of injury and request a Team Captain.
- No sports or physical activity.



RECOVERY: ORANGE STAGE

- Attend school for half days.
- · Relax at home.
- Get some exercise daily. Start with slow walks. Your doctor, trainer or physical therapist can guide you.
- When you first return to class, don't take notes, just listen.
- No tests. No sports, band, chorus or gym class.



RECOVERY: YELLOW STAGE

- Attend school full days.
- Continue an active conversation with all of your teachers about your school work and create a work calendar to distribute make-up work
- If symptoms start to flare while you are in class, taking a 2-3 minute restroom or water cooler break may help.
- Limit to one major test per day, consider un-timing tests.
- Complete as much homework as possible in 15-30 min blocks of time rather than all at once.
- No sports, but may begin to exercise (check with your doctor, trainer or physical therapist).



RECOVERY: GREEN STAGE

- Attend school full-time.
- Continue to meet with teachers regularly to make-up schoolwork with work calendar.
- Return to sports ONLY if cleared by a physician AND you are managing your school work well, using a gradual return to play protocol.



Academic expectations during recovery







STAGE	KEY IDEAS	EXPECTED DURATION	TEACHER'S ACTIONS	STUDENT'S ACTIONS
RED	Complete Rest	2-4 days	Contacted by nurse.Create a team captainNo work to be done by student.	RESTOut of school.Strict limits on computers, television, texting and cell phones.
ORANGI	deficits in processing and in processing and concentration. SLOW integration back into activity.		 Goal: Transition student back to school at a SLOW pace Develop three categories for assignments: Excused. Not to be made up. Accountable. Responsible for content, not process. May work with another student or tutor. Responsible. Must be completed by student. Advocate for a tutor if patient is struggling with workload. Continue communication between home and school. Support student through their slow recovery. 	 Half days. When you first return to class, don't take notes, <i>just listen</i>. Communicate with teachers about symptoms and create work calendar. Keep copies of current work and assignment. Be patient with slow recovery and be involved in class as much as possible.
YELLOV	increase in student responsibilities as they progress to a normal workload.	Longest stage, one week up to several months.	 Support and create a work calendar to stagger make-up work. Continue to communicate with the student and parents regularly. Advocate for a tutor if patient is struggling with workload. Decrease workload if symptoms worsen. Limit student to one major test per day. 	 Continue to communicate with teachers on your progress on make-up work. Follow work calendar Communicate with your parents and teachers on your recovery.
GREEN	Complete return to normal activities.		 Monitor completion of make-up work. Continue school-to-home communication to ensure the student is at the same pace with all other students. Inform guidance if term grades have been updated. 	 Attend school full-time. Continue to meet with teachers regularly to make-up schoolwork with work calendar. Return to sports ONLY if cleared by a physician AND you are managing your school work well, using a gradual return to play protocol.

Addressing Potential Long-Term Recovery Challenges

Fortunately, most recover from a concussion in about three weeks. In some instances however, recovery may be slower. If so, the following resources may be helpful:

- Appointment with primary care physician to discuss a referral to a doctor who specializes in concussion treatment.
- Appointment with a licensed mental health professional for counseling.
- If school continues to be a problem, work with your guidance counselor to formulate a long-term plan. Class schedules and workload may need to be adjusted.
- A concussion rehabilitation program can be helpful to treat symptoms of balance disorders, visual tracking issues, neck or back pain, and exercise intolerance.
- Speech therapy can build skills to adapt to longer-term cognitive problems.

Additional Resources and Programs

ImPACT[©]

Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Testing, or ImPACT, is a test which measures recovery of cognitive functions such as memory, attention, and speed of thinking that are often affected by a concussion. Ideally a student has baseline scores from taking the test before the injury. Use of ImPACT testing during recovery, and again when symptom-free, gives parents and physicians another tool to determine a student's readiness to return to school and sports. Please call South Shore Hospital's Concussion clinic at **(781) 624-8162** for more information about ImPACT. Both baseline and post-injury ImPACT testing is available.

South Shore Hospital's Reading Partnership

South Shore Hospital's Reading Partnership helps to minimize the risk of reading difficulties in young children by encouraging parents-to-be to nurture their newborns and toddlers through reading. The Reading Partnership supports an online, research-based, early literacy screening tool developed by the National Center for Learning Disabilities for use by pediatricians, parents and teachers of preschool aged children. Please contact Jean Ciborowski-Fahey, Ph.D., education director, at **(781) 624-4331** for information.

South Shore Hospital's Trauma Injury Prevention Program

As the first and only licensed trauma center in Southeastern Massachusetts, including the Cape and Islands, South Shore Hospital is committed to preventing traumatic injuries. Working in collaboration with other safety-oriented coalitions and partners, we provide both direct education as well as technical assistance to other health care providers and community groups to address their specific injury concerns. Programs include child passenger safety (car seat clinics), teen driving, senior falls prevention, bike safety, and youth sports safety. Please contact our trauma injury prevention office at (781) 624-4253 for information.

High school teacher: "It allows me to be more sensitive to the needs of students who have an injury that is not obvious. To have a concussion plan is critical considering the rapid pace of today's education environment."

Programs & Resources



South Shore Hospital's Concussion Management Clinic

South Shore Hospital's Concussion Management Clinic is headed by Janet Kent, MD. Dr. Kent, a credentialed ImPACT consultant, is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation and has 15 years of experience working with brain injuries. Dr. Kent evaluates the concussed student, explains the proper management of the injury to students and parents, prescribes medication to improve symptoms, and medically clears students for return to play when they are fully recovered. A concussion rehabilitation program may be prescribed. If needed, Dr. Kent will work with the student's school to modify academic demands until the student is fully recovered. Please call the clinic coordinator at (781) 624-8162 for an appointment.

South Shore Hospital's Youth Health Connection

South Shore Hospital's Youth Health Connection is dedicated to the positive mental health and physical well-being of youth. The program advances positive youth health outcomes through knowledge, risk prevention, collaboration, respect, connectedness and coalition building. The Youth Health Connection speakers' bureau provides schools and communities with access to experts in physical and emotional youth development. Please contact Barbara J. Green, PhD, medical director, at (781) 749-9227 ext. 3; Kim Noble, RN, MBA, program coordinator, at (781) 624-7415; or Karin Farrell, BS, administrative secretary at (781) 624-7849 for more information. You also may visit www.southshorehospital.org/yhc





Educational Technology Support

BrowseAloud

BrowseAloud is a software program that reads aloud all website content. As you move the cursor over words, they are spoken aloud. Free download. www.browsealoud.com

"Heads Up" on Concussion

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has created free tools for youth and high school sports coaches, parents, athletes and health care professionals that provide important information on preventing, recognizing and responding to a concussion. www.cdc.gov/concussion

ImPACT Concussion Management

ImPACT provides computerized neurocognitive assessment tools and services that are used by coaches, athletic trainers, doctors and other health professionals to assist them in determining an athlete's fitness to return to play after a concussion. www.impacttest.com

Kurzweil Educational Systems

If long-term assistance is needed, this program may be of benefit, as it helps read text and allows for highlighting and note-taking, with printouts for use as study guides. Documentation of a learning disability may be required. Families can send for a 30-day free trial CD. www.kurzweiledu.com

MomsTeam.com

MomsTeam.com is an online youth sports information gateway for the 90 million youth sports parents seeking advice, community and product information from a world-class team of expert psychologists, nutritionists, athletes, medical doctors, journalists, coaches, referees and parents dedicated to one mission: to make sure that youth sports are safe, affordable, stress-free and more fun! www.momsteam.com

Texthelp

TextHelp at www.texthelp.com is a web app that helps read text online. A trial version of the support software is available.

Educational Technology Support

Kindle is now available as a free download for MAC/PC, iPhone, iPad, Android and Blackberry. www.amazon.com, Kindle section. iBooks is also available for use on MAC, iPhone and iPad. www.apple.com/itunes. Download audiobooks to your iPhone, Android, Kindle or MP3 player at Amazon Audible www.Audible.com. Trial offer of first book free.

Play Smart

Play Smart: Understanding Sports Concussion is an exciting and informative video series produced by the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts for parents, coaches and student athletes. The video series includes two 12-minute videos, one specifically designed for coaches and parents and another for student athletes. Play Smart includes the essential knowledge on sports concussions, personal testimonies of student and professional athletes, and expert advice. Play Smart educates audiences on the signs and symptoms of concussion, emphasizes the importance of proper management and best methods for follow-up, and highlights this important public health issue. www.biama.org/whatdoes/playsmart.html

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Readings

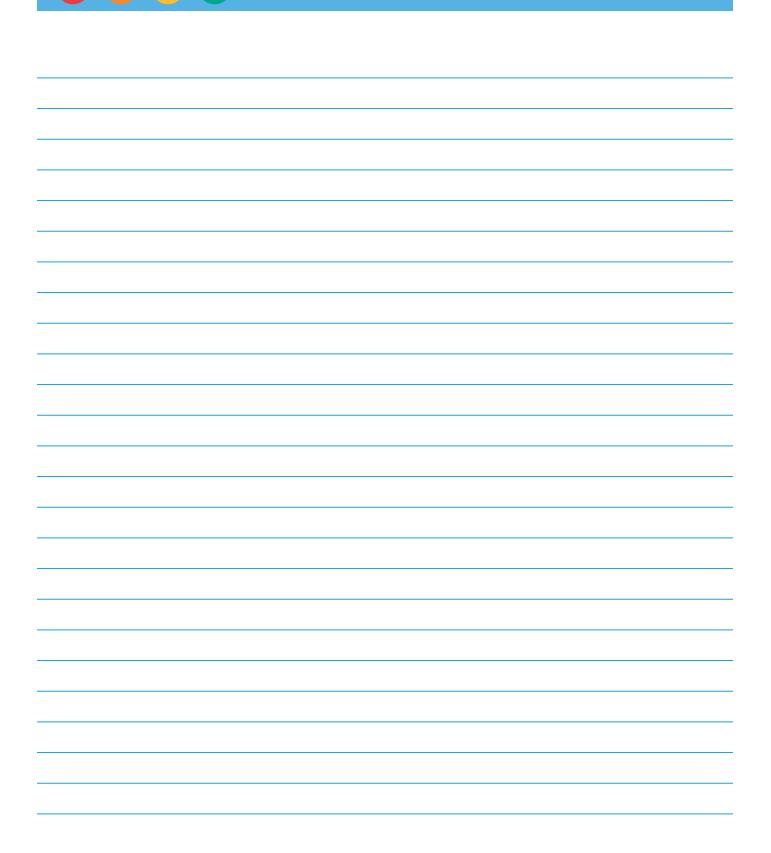
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Physician: "Parents, if your child is text messaging constantly use the 15 minute rule: give your child their cell phone and allow them to text for 15 minutes twice a day, then take the phone away."











HeadSmart is a component of South Shore Hospital's Community Benefits Program.

South Shore Hospital is the leading regional provider of acute, outpatient, home health, and hospice care to the approximately 600,000 residents in southeastern Massachusetts. South Shore Hospital's home health care division includes South Shore Visiting Nurse Association, Hospice of the South Shore, and Home & Health Resources.

As a not-for-profit, tax-exempt, charitable organization, South Shore Hospital serves all in medical need, regardless of ability to pay. The primary way that South Shore Hospital benefits the community is through clinical programs that meet our region's most prevalent medical needs, such as maternal/newborn care, heart and stroke care, cancer care, trauma care, orthopedic care and home health care. We also offer community benefits programs that advance our charitable mission by focusing on initiatives that support the principles of Massachusetts health care reform, improve the management of chronic diseases, reduce disparities in the provision of care,



promote wellness in vulnerable populations, and sustain vital health services. Please visit www.southshorehospital.org for more information.





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