

Helping prevent PTSD in children

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Research led by a University of Queensland professor has found that web-based intervention can prevent post-traumatic stress disorder developing in children after accidental injury.

Professor Justin Kenardy, working with the Centre of National Research on Disability and Rehabilitation Medicine (CONROD), said the findings gave hope to highly distressed children.

The research centred on an [accident website and booklet](#), which provides parents and children with [information](#) about coping skills and resilience strategies.

Different information is provided for children aged 10 and under, and 11 and over.

"We were surprised to see how significantly these tools helped to reduce [trauma symptoms](#) in children who had been hospitalised and who displayed high levels of distress," Professor Kenardy said.

"You can imagine how traumatising it is to a child when they have been injured in an event like a car accident.

"It's important that we learn how to reduce childhood trauma as it can have lifelong implications."

The researchers compared outcomes for 60 children aged between seven and 16 who received the web-based information and booklet, to those who received usual care at the hospital. The study found that targeting the intervention at those with high initial distress was likely to be more effective than intervening with all children involved in accidents.

"We hope to one day see these tools used by health services and professionals," Professor Kenardy said.

"The ultimate aim is to have highly distressed [children](#) more likely to recover both physically and mentally from accidents."

Professor Kenardy's research, co-authored with UQ colleague Felicity Brown and CONROD's Catherine Cox, is published in the *Journal of Traumatic Stress*.

More information: "A Web-Based Early Intervention Can Prevent Long-Term PTS Reactions in Children With High Initial Distress Following Accidental Injury." *J. Traum. Stress*, 28: 366–369.
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