

Minor Head Injuries In Children

McKenzie Pediatrics

Almost all children bump their heads every now and then. While these injuries can be upsetting, most head injuries are minor and do not cause serious problems. In *very rare* cases, problems can occur after a minor bump on the head. We hope to help parents understand the difference between a head injury that needs only a comforting hug and one that requires immediate medical attention.

This information is intended for children older than age 1 year who were well *before* the injury, act normally *after* the injury, have *no* cuts on the head or face, and have *no* other injuries to the body.

For anything more than a light bump on the head, you should call our office. We will want to know when and how the injury happened and how your child is feeling.

If your child is alert and responds to you, the head injury is mild and usually no tests or X-rays are needed. Your child may cry from pain or fright, but this should last no longer than 10 minutes. You may need to apply a cold compress for 20 minutes to help the swelling go down and then watch your child closely for a period of time.

If there are any changes in your child's condition, call us right away. You may be instructed to bring the child to our office, or to the emergency department. The following are signs of a more serious injury:

- A constant headache that gets worse
- Slurred speech
- Dizziness that does not go away or happens repeatedly
- Extreme irritability or other abnormal behavior
- Clumsiness or difficulty walking
- Oozing blood or watery fluid from the nose or ears
- Difficulty waking up (sleepiness within 3 hours of a minor head injury is normal; difficulty waking the child back 1-2 hours later up is not)
- Vomiting two or more times (vomiting once within 3 hours of a minor head injury is normal)
- Unequal size of the pupils
- Unusual paleness that lasts for more than an hour
- Convulsions (Seizures)

If your child loses consciousness, call our office. Special tests *may* be needed to find out how serious the injury is. One such test is a CAT Scan, which is a special type of X-ray that gives a view of the brain and the skull. It is painless. Head X-rays can show fractures (bone breaks) of the skull, but do not show if there is a brain injury.

It is okay for your child to go to sleep. Wake him up in 2-3 hours to make sure he moves normally, wakes enough to recognize you, and responds to you.

Finally, vomiting that starts *more than 3 hours after a minor head injury* is always a reason to contact our office. You may then be directed to the emergency department for further evaluation.