

Head Injuries in Children

Today your child was seen for a head injury. Most head injuries are not serious and do not cause long-term problems. **We do not think your child needs to stay in the hospital. We believe that it is safe for your child to go home.** Below are answers to some common questions about this type of injury.

What is a concussion?

Sometimes when a child injures the head, the brain is injured. A mild brain injury is called a **concussion** and usually does not need treatment.

Symptoms of a concussion will vary with each patient. Some patients may pass out (lose consciousness) for a time, while others feel foggy or confused. After the injury many children will have headache, dizziness, nausea (feel sick to your stomach), or vomiting (throwing up).

When should I seek care after a head injury?

Seek care right away if your child:

- fell from a height of 5 feet or higher.
- was hit very hard or by a fast-moving object.
- is less than 6 months old.
- has an odd head shape (in an infant the soft spot may bulge).
- has bleeding that won't stop after you apply pressure for 10 minutes.

- has blood or fluid coming from ears or nose.
- passes out (loses consciousness).
- is more tired, crabby or hard to wake up.
- has a seizure.
- vomits more than 2 to 3 times after the injury.
- has a headache that is severe or gets worse.
- has trouble walking, talking or seeing.
- has numbness or weakness in any part of the body.

How do you know if a head injury is serious?

First, we look for signs of a serious brain injury, such as bleeding or swelling in the brain. This would be treated right away.

We ask questions about how your child was hurt and the symptoms. We also do physical and mental tests to assess the state of your child's brain and thinking.

Do you take CT scans?

A CT scan uses X-rays to take pictures of the inside of the body. The radiation from CT scans can add up and be harmful over a lifetime. It is best to avoid this test for a child unless it is clearly needed. If we need to do a CT scan, we will take special steps to limit the radiation your child receives.

How do I care for my child at home?

At home, you should watch your child closely.

Help your child rest. Your child should rest until symptoms go away. This means no activity that tires the brain such as texting or video games and no physical activity. Your child may need to stay home from school until feeling better.

Treat swelling. If your child has a bump or swelling, apply an ice pack for 20 minutes at a time.

Treat pain. Give Tylenol (acetaminophen) for headaches and pain every 4 to 6 hours.

Watch symptoms. Your child may still have symptoms after you get home. Too much activity can make them worse. Get help if you see any new symptoms. See the list that follows.

Return to the emergency department right away if you notice:

- Vomiting that lasts for 4 to 6 hours after the injury
- Headache that gets worse
- Increasing sleepiness or trouble waking up
- Behavior that is not normal
- Confusion or memory loss
- Stiff neck
- Seizure
- Trouble walking, talking or seeing
- Weakness or numbness in any part of the body.

For more information:

Call nurse advisors' line: 612-672-1065 or
Visit www.pemguidelines.org

Where can I get follow-up care?

You should have a follow-up visit with your family doctor after a head injury. A sports clinic is also a good place for follow-up care. They can tell you when it is safe for your child to return to sports or activities.

Fairview Sports and Orthopedic Care has several clinics in the Twin Cities. They can test how well the brain is working after an injury. This test is called *Impact*. The results will help the doctor choose the best care for your child.

Fairview Sports and Orthopedic Care

Concussion hotline: 952-460-4440

Appointments: 612-672-7100

Online: www.fairview.org/fsoc