



Head Injury

What it is?

Head injuries can be very scary to parents and kids, and we are here to help reassure and alleviate some of the concerns. Thankfully, most head injuries only cause localized swelling or bruising (which heals well), with the main symptom being pain and bruising to the site. The skull bone does a great job protecting the brain from being injured.

Types of head injuries:

- **Skin injuries** – cuts, scrapes, bruises, or swelling are common with injuries to the head and face. Big lumps or “goose-eggs” can be common due to the large blood supply to the scalp. For the same reason, small cuts on the head may bleed a lot. Bruises on the forehead can lead to black eyes 1 to 3 days later due to the spreading of blood downward by gravity.
- **Concussion** – This is a type of brain injury caused by a hard hit or jolt to the head. Most children who bump or hit their head do not have a concussion (see back).

Symptoms

Head injuries, without concussion, (concussion info on back) may cause temporary pain or fussiness and localized bleeding, often followed by localized bruising and/or a big “lump.”

What to do?

Symptom care:

- **Bleeding:** Clean cut or scrape with soap and water. Apply direct pressure for any bleeding using gauze or a clean cloth for at least 10 minutes or until the bleeding has stopped. Reach out to our office if the bleeding won't stop within 10 minutes or if the cut is very deep.
- **Swelling/Pain:** Place a cold pack on the site of injury for 15 minutes every 1-2 hours as needed. Give acetaminophen as needed. Avoid using aspirin or ibuprofen as this can increase the risk of bleeding

Observation:

- Watch your child closely during the first 2 hours after the injury to see if any concussion symptoms develop (see back for concussion information).
- It is okay to have your child lie down and rest as long as he/she does not have any signs of concussion. To be cautious, wake him up after 2 hours of sleeping to check that your child is alert and responds in a typical fashion to being awoken.

Diet:

- For the first 2 hours, it may be helpful to offer only clear fluids, in case your child vomits. Babies can continue to breastfeed or formula feed.

What to Expect

Swelling can take a week to go away. Pain at the injury site should improve over 2-3 days. A black eye may take 2 weeks to fully resolve.

When to call

Please call our office if:

- Pain or crying becomes severe or your child's symptoms are worsening
- Your child exhibits any symptoms of a concussion (see back)
- **Go to the ER with symptoms of a concussion that include a head injury “red flag.”** The symptoms that would warrant an ER visit include loss of consciousness, seizure, drastic change in behavior, worsening and worsening headache that is not improving with rest or medication, vomiting 2 or more times, difficulty walking or talking, or one-sided symptoms (unequal pupils, etc.)

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Reference: Schmitt Pediatric Guidelines LLC Author: Barton Schmitt MD, FAAP. Provided by ClearTriage, <https://www.cdc.gov/HEADSUP/>, https://www.cdc.gov/traumaticbraininjury/pdf/pediatricmtbiguidelineeducationaltools/2018-cdc_mtbi_discharge-instructions-508.pdf



Head Injury – Concussion

What it is?

A concussion is caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull; the head does not have to be hit to sustain a concussion. Loss of consciousness does not always happen with a concussion (only 10% of the time).

Symptoms

A head injury without concussion should cause pain at the site of injury, bruising, and/or bleeding. A concussion may cause this as well, but additionally, concussion symptoms should be present. Concussion symptoms may be noticed immediately or may not be obvious for a few days, until your child tries to do their usual activities.

Common Concussion Symptoms

- Headache (not just at site of injury)
- Feeling slowed down
- Dizziness or balance problems
- Trouble with attention or concentration
- Nausea or vomiting
- Light or noise sensitivity or vision
- Numbness or tingling
- Feeling more emotional or irritable
- Feeling like you're in a fog
- Sleep changes (much more or much less)

What to do?

- Follow the symptom care guide on side 1 to care for the site of injury
- Watch your child closely for the first few hours after the injury for any **head injury “red flags”** to occur. If these were to occur, we recommend going to a children’s ER.

Head Injury Red Flags

- Loss of consciousness
- Slurred speech, weakness, numbness, or decreased coordination
- Unusual behavior, increased confusion, restlessness, or agitation
- Seizure
- Vomiting 2 or more times
- A headache gets worse and worse without signs of improvement
- Drowsiness or inability to wake up

- After the first few hours, it is okay to have your child lie down and rest as long as he/she does not have any head injury “red flags”. The first night, to be cautious, either sleep in the same room or wake them up 1 time to assure that they arouse and respond in a typical fashion to being awoken.
- Stop all exercise and limit screen time. If bored at home, watching TV or movie on a large screen, as long as it is not worsening symptoms, is okay. Additionally, attempting to read, work on a puzzle, build Legos, etc, is okay as long as it is not worsening symptoms. Avoid video games, computer/tablet games, and games on the phone.
- Facilitate healthy habits. Try not to skip meals, eat a well-balanced diet, & drink plenty of water. Encourage going to bed earlier and avoiding screens an hour before bed.
- If an activity is worsening or causing concussion symptoms, take a break from the activity.
- If medication is needed for headaches in the first 2-3 days, we recommend acetaminophen/Tylenol; thereafter, Ibuprofen/Advil/Motrin is okay.

When to call

Call our office for an appointment once a concussion has occurred. We also have a concussion clinic, SportsSafe, where we can facilitate an appointment as needed.



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