

Heads Up About Head Injuries

Head injuries can consist of mild cuts, scrapes, bruises, bumps, lacerations—cuts that need stitches—and internal brain injury that may range from minimal swelling to severe bleeding.

PREVENTION

The best way to treat injury is to prevent it. Though we all want children to be active, it is important to keep safety in mind when they go out to play. Here are some guidelines for preventing head injuries when children are active:

- Make sure playground equipment rests on a proper surface (6 to 12 inches of mulch).
- Require children to wear proper helmets and safety gear.

TREATMENT

Mild injury:

- Clean with mild soap and warm water.
- Apply ice to bruised or swollen area.

Lacerations:

- Clean with mild soap and warm water and rinse.
- Apply pressure at site to stop bleeding at site.
- Take the child to a doctor to have the cut evaluated for stitches if: edges of cut are separated; cut is longer than one-fourth inch; fat is protruding from the cut.

Severe injury—call 911 for:

- Back or neck injury
- Seizures
- Persistent mental confusion or agitation
- Loss of consciousness

NORMAL SYMPTOMS

- Pale skin briefly after the injury
- Irritability (should improve with rest)
- Vomiting two to three times during the first hour after injury— if vomiting continues after first hour consult a doctor

CONSULT DOCTOR FOR WARNING SIGNS

- Drowsiness or irritability that does not improve during the first hour of observation
- Vomiting more than three times or after one hour of observation
- Unsteady gait
- Double or blurred vision
- Persistent or worsening headache despite acetaminophen
- Swelling on side of head above ear
- Loss of consciousness
- Change in mental status

Consult the child's doctor if any symptoms occur later the following week and without new explanations.

This general healthcare information should not be used as a substitute or in place of contacting your child's healthcare provider. If you need further assistance, call 404-250-KIDS to speak to a pediatric nurse. Visit www.choa.org/teachingsheets for more information.