

## head injury

### A HEAD INJURY (CONCUSSION) HAPPENS WHEN THE HEAD:

Hits against an object, and/or is hit by an object and/or is shaken and/or jarred hard. After a head injury you may see bruises or cuts on the face or head. The INSIDE of the head (brain) may also be hurt. There may be bleeding or other problems that may show right away or several days later. Children with head injuries must be watched closely for changes in the way they act.

### WHEN SHOULD I GET HELP IF MY CHILD HAS HAD A HEAD INJURY?

Call 911 for an ambulance or take your child to the nearest emergency department RIGHT AWAY if your child:

- Is, or was, unconscious (fainted, passed out),
- Has twitching of the face, arms or legs (convulsions),
- Has clear or bloody discharge from nose or ears,
- Is unable to move any body part,
- Is acting in an unusual way,
- Is less than one year old, or
- If you are worried for any reason.

Call your doctor or emergency department if the child with a head injury presents any of the following symptoms:

- Is more sleepy than usual, or is hard to wake up.
- Has trouble seeing or talking.
- Has a headache that gets worse or doesn't go away.
- Gets very cranky.
- Vomits more than once.
- Is confused: cannot answer simple questions like "What is your name?" or "How old are you?"
- Is dizzy or unsteady.
- Has a fever and/or is pale.
- Has a stiff neck.

### WHAT DO I DO AT HOME AFTER A DOCTOR HAS SEEN MY CHILD?

- Watch your child closely for changes in the way he/she acts.

- Let your child go to sleep if tired after the injury and your doctors approves. Awaken the child one hour later, the child should wake up and act in their usual manner. – If not, do advise your healthcare practitioner.
- During the first night after the injury, wake your child every 2 to 3 hours (or as often as your doctor tells you to) to be sure he/she wakes up easily and acts as usual.
- Give clear fluids (water, clear juices or ginger ale) instead of solid food if your child feels like throwing up.
- Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen to relieve mild headaches and help your child feel more comfortable. Follow directions on the bottle or as given by your doctor, for the right dose and how often you may repeat it. Do not use both medications at the same time or overlap dosages of acetaminophen and ibuprofen.
- Your child should continually get better but may feel tired for a few days. Allow normal activities when your child is feeling better.

### SAFETY TIPS

- Keep medicine in child restraint container and locked up.
- Do not give products that contain aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA) as they can increase the risk of Reyes Syndrome, a serious condition that can damage the liver and brain.

*Information is continued on the back side of this sheet.*

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medical reference sheets

## head injury (continued)

### HOW CAN I LESSEN THE CHANCE OF MY CHILD HAVING A HEAD INJURY?

- Prevent shaking or jarring of your child's head. Do not toss or swing your child. Jerking your child with the head or neck not supported can hurt the brain.
- Close doors or use security gates to keep a young child from falling down stairs.
- Supervise your child at all times in the bathtub.
- When using a change table or other raised surface, always secure the baby with your hand.
- NEVER LEAVE A BABY UNATTENDED.
- Never use a baby walker.
- In a vehicle, ALWAYS use an infant carrier, car seat, or seat belt, whichever is appropriate.
- Supervise a young child at play, including backyard, playgrounds and other outdoor activities.
- Have your child wear an appropriate helmet when participating in various sport activities.
- Teach you child traffic safety when walking or biking.
- Teach your child how to be safe at the playground, swimming pool and during other sport activities.



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