



PEDIATRICS AND ADOLESCENT MEDICINE, P.A.

HEAD INJURY

Most children at one time or another will fall and hit their heads. This usually occurs in early childhood, when they are first learning to walk. Close supervision and thoughtful arrangement of furniture may avoid some of these injuries from open windows. Later on, these types of injuries come from falls down stairs or from swings, bicycles, skateboards or rollerblades. Parents and sitters are often unnecessarily frightened by these minor injuries.

Usually a head injury results in some swelling and bruising. Applying ice or cold compresses directly to the bruise will help minimize swelling. If there is a deep cut, apply pressure to stop the bleeding, then look at the cut to decide whether stitches are needed. If the edges of the cut can be easily covered and pulled together with a snug adhesive bandage, stitches are not needed. If the edges gape open, or if fat or muscle tissue is visible, or if bleeding cannot be controlled with firm pressure, then sutures may be needed and you should call the office.

After a head injury, *watch your child closely for 24 hours or so*. During this time, feed the child a light diet such as liquids, toast and cereals. Any of the following signs are a danger signal for you to call your doctor:

- Vomiting (if it is recurrent or occurs more than 8 hours after the injury. It is common and harmless for a child to vomit once or twice shortly after the injury.)
- Clear fluid or blood draining from the nose or ears
- Any loss of consciousness (It is okay for the child to go to sleep, but one or two hours later, try to arouse him/her to be sure that he/she can be awakened)
- Weakness or difficulty moving the arms or legs
- Convulsions (jerking muscle spasms of the entire body)
- Loss of balance, coordination or behavioral disorientation or confusion
- Slurred speech
- Persistent, inconsolable crying
- Strange or unusual activity
- Pupils of unequal size or poorly responsive to bright light (the black part of the eye should constrict)
- Trouble with vision, such as seeing double
- No memory of the fall (in an older child)
- Pallor (unusual paleness) that lasts more than an hour.