Minor Head Injury in Children

A mild head injury, also known as concussion, means that the brain has had a slight jolt and will need time to recover. Not all bumps to the head result in concussion.

Information

Children's heads are often hurt when they bump into something hard like furniture or fall over. Parents should note that a fall from the child's own height usually isn't enough to cause a serious head injury. The size of the bump on the head also, has no connection with the severity of the injury. Sometimes injuries to the head can cause severe harm, but often small knocks cause bruising and pain for a short while only.

In a minor head injury the patient:

- has not lost consciousness
- is alert and interacts appropriately
- may have vomited, but only once
- may have bruising or cuts to the head
- is otherwise normal

It is important to seek medical advice for an assessment of your child if you are concerned. If an assessment is not required, it is still important to monitor your child for worsening condition. This information sheet does not give information on how to assess for a head injury, only how to manage and identify symptoms. It is not a substitute for professional medical care.

After a knock to the head, young children are often sleepy, especially if they have cried a lot or it is getting near to a nap time. If the child seemed well after the bump to the head, it is OK to let them go to sleep. But if they seem unusually sleepy, or they seem dazed when they wake, they should be seen by a doctor straight away.

Continue to check your child every hour for the first 4 hours to ensure they respond normally to gentle rousing if asleep. After this time check your child every 2 hours, for 24hrs, to check their condition and reaction.

ALWAYS get medical help quickly if:

- the knock on the head has been hard (perhaps in a car accident or a fall from a height)
- the child appears stunned or loses consciousness (even for a moment)
- the child seems unwell or vomits more than once after the knock.

If your child is unconscious call an ambulance on 000 straight away.

The Following Days:

Because bleeding or swelling in the brain can occur at a later time with any knock to the head, every child should be watched closely for signs of possible brain injury.

Things to watch for include:

- frequent vomiting
- severe or persistent headache or dizziness
- seizure like activity
- unusual or confused behaviour
- restlessness, drowsiness or irritability in a baby
- inability to wake up
- weakness of the arms or legs
- poor coordination
- slurred speech
- double or blurred vision
- bleeding from the ears

If any of these symptoms develop, have your child seen by a doctor immediately.

Help and assistance:

Talk to your doctor if you are worried about any signs or symptoms your child maybe displaying or call and speak to a nurse at 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) if you are concerned. In an emergency always call 000. Emergency departments at your local hospital are also available. Most children with a minor head injury will make a full recovery and symptoms only last a few days.