

Trauma capitis (a blow to the head)

If your child falls or hits a hard object with his/her head, the child will receive a hard blow. The severity of this blow depends on the speed and the force with which this occurs. It also depends on how hard the ground or the object is that the child has hit. In the event of a serious fall, bump or blow on the head, there is a slight risk of brain swelling or intracranial bleeding.

Can a fall or a blow to the head cause damage?

Usually a fall, bump or blow to the head will not cause damage, and the (pain) symptoms will disappear by themselves. In the event of a hard blow, there is a small risk of brain swelling or intracranial bleeding.

Without medical help, a child may become unconscious or fall into a coma. Although this rarely happens, it is life-threatening. Intracranial bleeding or brain swelling is not visible from the outside and can develop slowly. That is why it is important to watch your child closely for the first 24 hours after the accident, to monitor how he/she is doing. Sometimes this monitoring takes place at the hospital.

When should you contact a doctor?

If you are on your way home, call the doctor immediately if you notice your child developing any of the following symptoms.

1. He or she:

- is drowsy and not responding typically or you cannot get him/her to wake up.
- is acting confused.
- is behaving abnormally.
- has a severe headache.
- has constant nausea or keeps vomiting.
- has blood or liquid coming out of an ear.

2. Or if you have concerns because you feel that your child is not doing well.

You will receive the following advice after your child's accident:

- Ensure that your child takes it easy for the first few days if he/she is still experiencing symptoms. Your child can easily tell what he/she is capable of doing. Your child does not have to lie down in bed. The symptoms will go away by themselves.
- For the first few days, do not let your child watch a computer/TV screen for too long.
- Once your child no longer has symptoms, he/she can return to school or childcare. If your child has symptoms, he/she can still go to school or childcare after a few days. Your child will recover just as quickly as if he/she were to rest.

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- Does your child have frequent headaches, or is he/she not able to concentrate as usual? Ask your child's teacher to pay close attention to this. Your child might require extra attention during his/her class or at childcare.
- For the first 2 weeks after his/her accident, it is a good idea for your child to refrain from certain sports: sports in which the child can hit its head or develop another headache, such as football or another ball sport or martial arts. After 2 weeks, your child can gradually begin doing sports if he/she feels up to it.
- Children younger than 18 years of age may not drink alcohol. And certainly not during the first days after a blow or fall. Alcohol and drugs can cause drowsiness. Accordingly, it will no longer be possible to control whether this is due to the head blow or due to the effect of alcohol or drugs.

For more information, visit www.thuisarts.nl
and look for the topic 'Head trauma'.

Questions

If you have any questions about this brochure, you can contact the Outpatient Clinic Paediatrics at +31 (0)20 - 755 7028. In the evenings and at night you can call the general practitioner.