

# HUNTINGTON PLAZA PEDIATRIC GROUP

## FALLS AND HEAD TRAUMA

Children of all ages are notorious for falling and hitting their heads. In the first couple years of life, children frequently try to walk, run, and climb faster than their coordination allows. As a result, falls and head injuries are a recurrent event.

The best way to avoid a head injury is to prevent it. As your child becomes mobile, it is important to safety proof their surroundings. Be wary of sharp edges along counters, table tops, and fireplaces. Fix wall units and bookcases to the wall so that they cannot be pulled over. Monitor items that can be used to climb on like chairs, stools, and sofas.

### The Rules of Engagement:

1. **Stay calm.** Your child's reaction will feed off yours. If you look scared, they are going to be scared. If you start screaming and crying they are likely going to start crying. If you say "Oh, Boom" and start laughing and playing, they will likely start smiling and playing. If your child is crying, approach them calmly and comfort them.
2. **Listen to your child.** Your child will let you know if they are really hurt. If they are smiling and playing after they fall or hit their head then they are probably OK. If they are consolable in your arms and then want to eat dinner they are probably OK. If your child is not acting right, you need to call us immediately.
3. **Assess the injury.** Bumps on the head can look big, mean and grow quickly. After a head injury, it is not uncommon for your child's head (especially the forehead) to swell. This bump or contusion is due blood that collects between their skin and their skull. This blood does not affect the brain or cause brain damage. The swelling continues to increase in the first 24 hours. And just like a bruise, it may change colors over several weeks until it finally resolves. You need to call us for anything that looks abnormal or any open wounds.

### Treatment of a head injury:

1. **Ice.** Ice will decrease swelling. However most children who fall and hit their heads are between 1 and 3 years old and will not let you put ice on them. Do not worry. Just remember the swelling may get worse before it gets better. Do not fight with your child. Ice or no ice it will get better.
2. **Pain Control.** Give your child Tylenol or Ibuprofen for the pain.
3. **Monitor your child.** Watch how your child is acting after the fall. Keep them awake for one hour after the incident. For the next 24-48 hours, you should check on them 2-3 times overnight while they are sleeping (or during a nap) to ensure they are arousable. As long as they are arousable, you can let them sleep (and you do not have to get them up and walking around).

### Call your physician or 911 if:

1. **There is loss of consciousness.**
2. **Your child vomits more than 2 times.**
3. **Your child is lethargic, unarousable, or acting abnormally.**
4. **There is a laceration or uncontrollable bleeding.**
5. **Your child complains of persistent or worsening pain.**