

What is concussion?

Concussion is when a person loses consciousness after a blow to the head. The brain is able to move a small amount inside the skull, and a blow to the head can cause bruising as the soft brain hits the hard skull.

If the person is unconscious for a few minutes or more, that person usually needs care in a hospital. There may be other problems such as a skull fracture as well as concussion.

Mild head injuries causing unconsciousness for a few seconds usually do not leave any lasting problems, but for a while after the injury (hours to days), the person can have a bad headache. She may not cope well with school work or other tasks which require good concentration, for a few days.

More severe concussion can cause dizziness, confusion, difficulty with remembering things and restlessness that can last weeks or more. There can also be a long lasting headache. If any of these happen, it is important to check with a doctor. Extra help may be needed, including time off work or school.

For more information contact:

- Local Community Child Health Nurse
- Local Family Doctor
- Ngala Family Resource Centre Helpline
8.00 a.m. - 8.00 p.m. 7 days a week
Telephone (08) 9368 9368
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 111 546
www.ngala.com.au
- Parent Help Centre/Parenting line
Telephone (08) 9272 1466 (24 hour service)
Outside metro area - Freecall 1800 654 432

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Warning

This document is published as general information only. You should always consult a healthcare professional for diagnosis and treatment of any health condition or symptoms.



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head injuries



Children's heads are often hurt when they fall over or bump into something hard. Sometimes bangs on the head can cause very severe harm, but often small knocks just cause bruising and pain for a short while. If you have any concerns about your child after a bump to the head, always get the child seen by a doctor. This topic contains some information about managing bruises and minor cuts on the head. It does not give any information about how to assess whether the bang has caused any harm to the child.

Alert

If the bang on the head has been hard (perhaps in a car accident or a fall from a height), or the child appears dazed, loses consciousness (even for a moment), seems unwell or vomits after the bang, get medical help quickly. If your child is unconscious call an ambulance. Do not leave the child alone.

Note: Children can also have bad brain damage from being shaken. Never shake a baby.

Bruises

- Even small bangs on the head can cause large bruises and large soft swellings because the scalp has a very good blood supply and the bone of the skull is just under the skin (no 'padding' to absorb the knock).
- Sometimes the bruise can be kept small if ice (or a packet of frozen vegetables such as peas) is applied to the banged area quickly

(wrap ice in a damp cloth; do not put something very cold directly onto the skin).

- Some pressure on the banged area can also help if the child will allow it.
- These bruises usually go down quite quickly too (within a day or two), leaving just the colour of the bruise and a sore spot. If the swelling stays, the child should be seen by a doctor.

When to see a doctor

Get medical help quickly if:

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

If your child is unconscious call an ambulance. Do not leave the child alone.

You should also have your child seen by a doctor if you feel uneasy.



After a fall or bump young children are often sleepy, especially if they have cried a lot or it is getting near to a sleep time. If the child seemed well after the bang on the head, it is okay to let him go to sleep. But if he seems unusually sleepy (you cannot wake him up after about an hour or he seems dazed when he wakes), he should be seen by a doctor straight away.

Cuts

- Cuts on the scalp can bleed a lot, because of the good blood supply in the scalp.
- Put a clean dressing over the cut and press on the cut for about five to ten minutes.
- If the bleeding has stopped, gently examine the cut and if it is more than about one centimetre long it may heal better with treatment from a doctor.
- If the bleeding has not stopped in ten minutes, get the child seen by a doctor.
- Smaller cuts may heal without extra treatment so long as they are clean, but always check with a doctor if you are unsure. If there is any chance of dirt, glass or anything else in the cut, always get this checked by a doctor.
- Again, if the child seems dazed, loses consciousness, vomits or seems unwell after the bang, get help from a doctor.

Note: If the child is not fully immunised against tetanus, this should be checked with a doctor. An extra tetanus injection may be needed.