HEAD INJURY IN CHILDREN

Although frightening, most head injuries in children do not cause any significant problems. It is normal when a child gets hit in or bangs his/her head to have some scalp swelling, a headache, be somewhat sleepy, and to even vomit once or twice. It is generally okay to give acetaminophen (Tylenol) for a headache. Ibuprofen should not be given on an empty stomach, so it should be avoided if there is nausea or vomiting. Any abrasion should be washed with soap and water. An antibacterial ointment may then be applied. If there is swelling, ice or a cold pack should be applied at intervals of 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off for the first hour or two. The child should be monitored for the first 24 hours after a head injury by a reliable adult/family member. It is often reassuring, but not usually necessary to wake the child once during the first night to make sure that s/he will open her/his eyes and recognize you.

Call 911 if there is:
1) loss of consciousness for more than one minute. Do not move the neck of anyone who is unconscious from a fall or from an unwitnessed event/injury.
2) A seizure/convulsion
3) difficulty breathing
4) extreme irritability, won’t stop crying
5) extreme lethargy/sleepiness, not interactive/responsive

Call the office if there is:
1) any loss of consciousness
2) confusion or agitation
3) unsteady gait/walking
4) persistent vomiting
5) severe or persistent headache
6) clear or bloody drainage from the nose or ear
7) blurred vision
8) dizziness
9) soft “mushy” swelling on an infant’s head
10) a fall on the head from more than 5 feet
11) any fall in a child less than 6 months of age
12) weakness or numbness in any body part
13) the child doesn’t remember what happened
14) the child is very pale
15) a laceration that look like it will need stitches or staples
16) bleeding that lasts more than 10 minutes despite applying constant pressure
17) the child is hit with a hard object that moves very fast, e.g. a baseball bat or golf club

Helmets for biking, skiing, and other sports, car seats, booster seats, gates on stairs, and window guards are ways to prevent some head injuries. If any questions or concerns, please give us a call!