



Head Protection

EMERGENCY! Head Injury Guidelines

Head injuries — whether obvious or not — can cause bleeding inside the skull, placing pressure on the brain and causing brain damage. However, not all injuries are life threatening. Some warrant an immediate trip to the emergency room while others can be evaluated and treated in the doctor's office.

Go to the emergency room when the victim:

- Has lost consciousness
- Has a loss of memory about the injury
- Is having seizures
- Is unable to move limbs or extremities
- Has blood or fluid coming from the nose or ears
- Is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs

Go to a physician when the person:

- Has vision problems
- Is vomiting repeatedly
- Has a change in behavior (sleep, irritability or lethargy)
- Is drowsy
- Has a severe or persistent headache
- Is slurring speech
- Is experiencing difficulty walking or balancing

Important: If a child under 2 years old suffers a head injury, see a physician immediately.

Remember: Head injuries don't heal the same way broken arms or legs do. You can suffer many kinds of head injuries, including skull fractures, concussions, cerebral contusions, lacerations and intracranial hemorrhaging. Brain injuries are unpredictable. They may not be apparent right away. Observe the victim carefully. Symptoms of bleeding inside the head usually occur within the first 24 to 72 hours.

On the Home Front

What you should know about minor head injuries:

The size of the bump does not indicate the severity of the injury. **Do this first:** Apply ice to the bruised area to help control swelling.

Observe the individual carefully for the first eight hours. Check the eyes' pupils to see whether they are enlarged. Within eight hours, the person should be back to normal, except perhaps for prominent, "goose egg" swelling.



At-Home and Recreational Risks

CLIMBING LADDERS

Each year more than 160,000 people are injured after falling from ladders at home; about 15 percent die as a result of their injuries. **Prevention:** Make sure your ladder is placed on even ground, ask for someone to hold it steady and spot you, and don't step on the top rung.

CYCLING

Wearing a bicycle helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent and the risk of brain injury by 88 percent. **Prevention:** Make sure every member of your family wears a helmet that fits snugly, has adjustable straps and sits level on the person's head. Look for labels inside the helmet indicating its safety approval rating.

SWIMMING

Plunging head first into too-shallow water can result in spinal cord injuries, paralysis or fatal head trauma. **Prevention:** Make it a rule: Feet first, first time and until you're sure of the water's depth.

ON THE JOB: What Goes Wrong?

While working, you may not always think about your head — or always protect it. That's why thousands of workers suffer mild to severe head injuries each year.

What puts you at risk for head injury? Forgetting to wear a hard hat or helmet, distraction, carelessness, fatigue or alcohol and drug use.



HEAD INJURIES MAY BE CAUSED BY THE FOLLOWING:

- falling or flying objects
- bumping your head against a fixed object
- electrical shock or burns due to contact with exposed electrical conductors
- falling off of a scaffold
- tripping over an electrical cord
- falling on a wet floor
- falling from a stepladder

FOR SAFETY, USE YOUR HEAD!

Head protection consists of hard hats, safety caps and helmets, but damaged gear may not work when you need it.

Follow this checklist:

- ✓ **INSPECT** your hard hat or cap thoroughly for any signs of damage.
- ✓ **VISUALLY CHECK** other components of your hard hat, such as suspensions, headbands and sweatbands for dents, cracks or penetration. **Tip:** Paints, paint thinners and some cleaning agents can weaken the shell, as can exposure to sunlight and heat.
- ✓ **CLEAN** your hat's shell with a mild detergent.
- ✓ **STORE** your helmet in a clean, dry area where it's not exposed to extreme heat or cold.

HARD HATS: Get the Right Fit

Hard hats come in various sizes. To make sure a hard hat fits correctly, there should be a 1/2-inch clearance between your head and the shell.

In addition, a hard hat should fit squarely on the top of the head and not be tilted to one side or the back. Hard hats should not fall off when the head is bent down. A chin strap can secure a hard hat.

Regardless of what type of head protection you use, it won't work if you don't wear it.