

Top safety tips to avoid a traumatic brain injury



Thump ... thud ... ouch!
Mom! Dad! I hit my head!

These are all common things you might hear when your child bumps their head from falling, getting hurt in sports or running into another kid while playing. And even though it is not always serious, a strong blow to the head can sometimes cause a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Traumatic brain injuries are mild to severe injuries that affect the brain and lead to physical, behavioral and cognitive problems. Here are our top five tips to help parents protect children from TBIs.

1. Buckle up for car rides. Always use the proper car seat or booster seat for your child's age, height and weight. Make sure it is installed correctly and that your child is buckled in safely.



2. Always wear a helmet for safety. Be a role model. Everyone should wear helmets that fit properly when they ride bikes, skateboards, scooters or while doing any other activity that could lead to a head injury. Helmet size is based on head size, not age.



3. Make your home safe for kids. Install safety gates on stairs, use window guards and make sure heavy furniture is secure to help prevent injuries at home. Always supervise your child closely, especially babies and toddlers. Do not leave them alone on high places like beds, counters or couches where they might fall and get hurt.



4. Choose a safe playground. When you go to the playground for fun and exercise, choose one that has soft impact-absorbing surfaces like rubber, mulch or wood chips. These materials can cushion a child's fall and help prevent injuries.



5. Understand abusive head trauma, formerly known as shaken baby syndrome. Shaking babies is dangerous. It can damage a developing baby's brain and even result in death. Never shake a baby when you are overwhelmed. If you are feeling frustrated it is OK to set your baby down in a safe space, like a crib or bassinet, and walk away to have time to breathe and calm down.



It's not possible to eliminate every risk, but by following these safety tips, you can reduce your child's chance of a fall or accident causing TBI.

If your child does experience TBI symptoms from a bump to the head—such as dizziness, headache or nausea—peace of mind comes from knowing that Riley Children's Health is home to Indiana's only comprehensive traumatic brain injury and concussion program with services for children experiencing all forms of neurotrauma.

This information was provided by a pediatric neurotrauma surgeon who is part of Indiana's longest-standing Level I Pediatric Trauma Center at Riley Hospital for Children in downtown Indianapolis.



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