

Bicycle helmets do not stop closed head injuries

Question: Do you find that children that have bicycle injuries are protected from head injuries if they wear a helmet?

Answer: Bicycle helmets are a great means of protecting your child's head from external damage but any hard traumatic impact will have negative consequences for the skull and brain. Although your skull protects your brain it still can move within its confines. In fact, it moves with every respiratory cycle. I find that many children and adults do not wear their helmet correctly, whether it is a bike, motorcycle, football, or a ski helmet. The helmet should be firm and snug around the skull and any straps should be pulled tight to the chin. The helmet should move with the direction of your head and not opposite or flop forward or backward. Helmet technology has grown extensively over the last ten years, developing lighter yet more shock resistant materials. The progress does nothing to prevent close head injuries unfortunately. We see numerous concussions from even mild falls with properly worn helmets.

Your brain is extremely sensitive to movement. Besides the hard exterior skull it is protected by meninges, which are very strong elastic coverings of your brain and spine. Your brain and its coverings are enriched with blood supply. Trauma creates swelling which can lead to bleeding in the meninges, brain or spine. Even the smallest vessel fracture is considered a serious condition. A fracture to the skull is even more severe because it exposes the brain to an unstable state.

People need to be aware that wearing a helmet is no panacea. A properly fitting helmet should be horizontal on the head, with a snug but comfortable fit, using the manufacturer's foam pads if necessary. All falls or injuries from a bike fall should be immediately checked by your chiropractor. More severe traumas should be taken directly to the emergency room for examination or call for an ambulance if you feel uncomfortable about moving the child.

Quote of the week: *"Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died."* –

Erma Bombeck