The ABC’s of Pediatric Summertime Emergencies: What Every Parent Should Know

Tip sheet developed by
Shari L. Platt, MD
Chief, Pediatric Emergency Medicine

Bicycle Safety 101
- Only 20% of children wear helmets
- If 100% wore helmets, it would reduce approximately 500 fatalities & >150,000 non-fatal head injuries each year
- Riders wearing helmets have 1/3 risk of sustaining head injury
- NY State Law: All people ages 1 to 14 are required to wear a certified bicycle helmet when bicycling, in-line skating, operating a non-motorized scooter or skateboard
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How to Encourage Helmet Use?
- Develop lifetime users
  - Start early—first riding a tricycle
- Let child choose his/her own helmet
- Adults wearing helmets —increases likelihood of child use
- Discuss “head safety” with your child

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Safety Tips for Riders:
- Make sure your helmet fits snuggly and covers your mid-forehead
- Do not ride at dusk or nighttime
- Wear bright colors and reflective devices
- Avoid traffic and streets when possible
- Always walk across streets
- Learn to stop and utilize proper hand signals
- Obey road signs
- Check that all parts and breaks are properly functioning
- Ride safely—don’t perform tricks or stunts

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Scooter, In-Line Skating & Skateboard Injuries

- Moderate risk for injury, mostly fractures
- Very few considered severe, rare fatality

AAP Guidelines
- Close supervision for younger children
- Wear helmet, knee & elbow pads, wrist guards for skates
- Stay away from traffic
- Never ride at night / dusk
- Avoid gravel, rocky surfaces
- Warn children about skitching (hitching a ride by holding onto a motor vehicle while riding on a skateboard, roller skates or bicycle)
Playground & Sports Injuries

- Laceration
- Broken bones (fracture)
- Head injury
- Do you see any bleeding?
- Does she complain of pain?
- Can your child move all of his/her extremities?
- Did your child hit her head?
  - Did your child have a blackout?
  - Does your child have headache or dizziness?
  - Does your child have nausea or vomiting?

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If your child has a head injury, call EMS (911) if your child has the following...

- Abnormal mental status; not acting normally
- Lethargy
- Irritable
- Difficult to console
- Difficult to awaken or arouse
- Large bump or swelling on head (scalp hematoma)—less than 2 years of age
- Loss of consciousness (“passing out” for more than 5 seconds)
- Palpable skull fracture
- Other concerning signs or symptoms
- Vomiting
- Seizure
- Blood or clear liquid coming from the nose or ears
- Severe headache
- Dizzy, not walking normally
Andrew is playing Lacrosse for high school...
- Collides with a teammate
- Falls to ground
- Unresponsive < 5 mins
- Wakes and seems a bit confused
- Now is fine
- Does not remember the incident
- Has a very slight headache

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Andrew has a Concussion

- Temporary loss of normal brain function due to trauma
- May be mild, and cause no future damage
- Signs of a concussion may develop immediately, or over first 24–72 hrs
  - “Seeing stars”, feeling dazed, dizzy or lightheaded
  - Memory loss, trouble remembering right before or after the injury
  - Vomiting
  - Headache
  - Blurry vision, sensitive to light or noise
  - Confusion, slurred speech or saying things that don’t make sense
  - Difficulty concentrating, thinking or making decisions
  - Difficulty with coordination or balance
  - Feeling anxious or irritable for no apparent reason
  - May last 1–2 weeks, sometimes longer

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When to go to the ER if you have signs of a concussion...

Stop participating in the sport
- Go to the ER for further evaluation
- The ER doctor will perform a thorough neurologic examination
- Your child will likely have a Head CT performed (or possibly an MRI) to evaluate for bleeding or other serious brain injury
- Your child will likely go home from the ER

Treatment after the ER
- Rest and light activity are needed to allow the brain to heal
- Follow-up with a Pediatric Neurologist is recommended
- Your child should not participate in sports until cleared by a doctor
- Repeat concussions may lead to permanent brain injury or another concussion
- Wear proper head and protective gear when playing sports
- Observe rules of the sport, practice good sportsmanship
- Tell your coach about any prior concussion

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