

GOVERNMENT CALLS FOR BETTER TRACKING OF STATISTICS



Sue Ogrocki / Associated Press

Safety helmets are provided in a container in a pre-K classroom at an elementary school in Oklahoma. Comprehensive new children's concussion guidelines by the U.S. government are the first recommendations that come from evidence and 25 years of research.

New guidelines seek to reassure parents about childhood concussions

By Lindsey Tanner
Associated Press

CHICAGO — New children's concussion guidelines from the U.S. government recommend against routine X-rays and blood tests for diagnosis and reassure parents that most kids' symptoms clear up within one to three months.

Signs of potentially more serious injuries that may warrant CT imaging scans include vomiting, unconsciousness and severe, worsening headaches, according to the guidelines released Tuesday.

The guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are the first broad evidence-based recommendations for diagnosing and treating children's concussions, the researchers say. They evaluated 25 years of scientific research on managing concussions in children and chose procedures with the strongest evidence of benefit.

The American Academy of Neurology has similar evidence-based guidelines, but strictly for sports concussions in child and adult athletes and focused on restricting return to play. The American Academy of Pediatrics also has guidance for managing sports concussions, and for returning to school after a concussion.

The CDC's guidelines are for concussions from all causes, including falls, sports and car accidents. They recommend rest from physical and mental activity including school and sports immediately after a concussion, gradually resuming normal routines.

CDC brain injury specialist Matthew Breiding, a co-author of the guidelines, said parents should tell their kids to report any concussion symptoms right away — whether they occur at home or during sports activities.

"Some children and teens think concussions aren't serious or worry that if they report a concussion they will lose their position on the team or look weak. Remind them that it's better to miss one game than the whole season," he said.

By some estimates, at least 1 million U.S. children get concussions each year although the true frequency is unknown because there is no national effort to track them and many go untreated. The CDC has proposed developing a surveillance system to fill that gap and the new guidelines, published in JAMA Pediatrics, aim to improve detection and treatment.

The guidelines provide important advice for parents and doctors on managing kids' concussions and could contribute to a "personalized approach to state-of-the-art care," according to a journal editorial by brain injury experts at the Medical College of Wisconsin and University of California, San Francisco.

Concussions, also called mild traumatic brain injury, are caused by a bump or jolt to the head. The impact causes the brain to bounce or twist, potentially damaging brain cells. Repeated concussions have been linked with a debilitating brain disease found in autopsies on some retired football players.

Breiding said many people mistakenly believe that "you need to lose consciousness or be 'knocked out' in order to have a concussion."

Headaches, dizziness, sensitivity to light or noise and sleep problems are among other possible symptoms that experts say warrant medical attention.

The guidelines' highlights include:

- X-rays and CT scans aren't effective at detecting concussions. They are sometimes done if doctors suspect a skull fracture or brain bleeding, but CT scans are preferred if a serious injury seems likely. Families should be told of potential risks from CT scans including radiation.

- Blood tests for detecting concussion haven't been proven to work and shouldn't be done outside of research.

- Most children's symptoms clear up within one to three months but recovery varies and can be delayed in kids who've had previous concussions.

- Teens, kids with learning difficulties and those with mental illness all tend to recover more slowly than young children.

- Rest, the main treatment, is recommended for the first three days, but inactivity beyond that may worsen symptoms.

- Children with undiagnosed concussions are at risk for another one and longer recovery times.

Painkiller linked to higher risk of heart disease, stroke

By Najja Parker
Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Many people reach for painkillers to get rid of headaches or reduce fever, but some of those common medicines could raise your risk of heart disease or stroke, according to a new report.

Researchers from Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark recently conducted a study, published in the British Medical Journal, to explore the cardiovascular risks associated with diclofenac, a traditional non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID).

To do so, they used national registry data that included information on 6.3 million adults in Denmark. The participants, aged 46 to 56, were split into groups with low, moderate or high baseline cardiovascular risk and were followed for 20 years from 1996 until 2016.

Researchers found that, within 30 days of starting diclofenac, there was an increased rate of major adverse cardiovascu-

lar events, such as irregular heart beat or flutter, ischemic stroke, heart failure and heart attack, compared with those starting other traditional NSAIDs.

In fact, the risk of having an adverse cardiovascular event rose by 50 percent among those who took diclofenac, compared with those who had not.

Furthermore, they said there was also a relationship between diclofenac and an increased rate of cardiac death and upper gastrointestinal bleeding.

A 2018 study of 57,000 people in Taiwan, published in the British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology, revealed that some prescription pain relievers, such as ibuprofen and naproxen, may be linked to irregular heartbeat.

Another study published in March 2017, which analyzed nearly 30,000 patients, concluded that the consumption of any kind of NSAIDs such as ibuprofen could boost the risk of heart attack by 31 percent.

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Time for a fall clearout?
What you should know about the disposal of household hazardous waste.

What is household hazardous waste?
HHW is anything labeled toxic, flammable, corrosive, reactive or explosive. These materials can threaten family health and the safety of pets and wildlife.

What are some examples of hazardous waste?
Aerosols, Bleach, Drain Cleaners, Metal Polish; Moltbaths, Oven Cleaners, Toilet Bowl Cleaners, Ammonia-based Cleaners, Mercury Thermometers, Wood Polishes, Waxes, Fertilizers, Insecticides, Herbicides, Rodenticides, Spa and Pool Chemicals, Roofing Compounds, Antifreeze, Batteries, Motor Oil, Paint Strippers and Thinners, Gasoline and more.

Where can I safely dispose of my hazardous waste?
La Grande Facility: Open to any resident of the three counties every other Tuesday, 8am-12 noon. By appointment, however, small labeled quantities accepted daily. (541) 963-5459.
Baker City Facility: Open the first Wednesday of each month, 10am-12 noon. By appointment only. (541) 523-2626.
Enterprise Facility: Open the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month 10am-12 noon. By appointment only. (541) 426-3332.

Americans generate 1.6 million tons of HHW per year!
The average home can accumulate as much as 100 pounds of hazardous waste.