

Kids with head injury apt to have another

Last Updated: 2007-04-13 13:50:14 -0400 (Reuters Health)

By Michelle Rizzo

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Children who suffer a head injury are quite likely to have a similar injury subsequently, researchers report.

"We do not really understand the mechanism behind repetitive head injuries in children," Dr. Bonnie R. Swaine, of the University of Montreal, Canada, told Reuters Health. "These results support anecdotal evidence of the phenomenon."

As for an explanation, Swaine continued, "It is reasonable that children with a head injury who do not regain their pre-injury state of health could be at risk for another injury."

Swaine's team conducted a study of young patients seen in the emergency departments of two Montreal pediatric hospitals. Parents of 11,867 children with injuries (of any type) completed telephone interviews at 6 months and 12 months after their child's injury.

Within 6 months of the initial injury, 2.4 percent of the children sustained a subsequent head injury, the investigators report in the medical journal *Pediatrics*. Within 12 months, 4.1 percent had had a subsequent head injury.

The risk of having a subsequent head injury within 6 months was 1.7-times higher among the 3599 children with an initial head injury than for the 6716 children with a non-head injury.

Results were similar at 12 months.

A head injury, even a mild one, can result in a wide range of physical and mental consequences, Swaine pointed out. "Even subtle deficits in coordination, balance, or endurance ... might reduce a child's ability to meet the demands of a difficult task and thus increase a child's risk for re-injury."

Swaine noted that at the time of the study, a period of 4 weeks was generally recommended before returning to physical activities after a head injury. "This intervention seemed to have little effect on the risk of subsequent head injury," she said. "The recommendations given to parents and children about returning to activities should be examined more closely."

Moreover, Swaine concluded, "These results underscore the importance of promoting helmet use in children."

SOURCE: *Pediatrics*, April 2007.

Copyright © 2007 Reuters Limited. All rights reserved. Republication or redistribution of Reuters content, including by framing or similar means, is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Reuters. Reuters shall not be liable for any errors or delays in the content, or for any actions taken in reliance thereon. Reuters and the Reuters sphere logo are registered trademarks and trademarks of the Reuters group of companies around the world.