Helmets for Kids

By Amy Bentley

KEEP YOUR CHILD’S HEAD SAFE

“Helmets came about as a result of trying to prevent skull fractures, from football to bike riding,” says Dr. Sharief Taraman, CHOC pediatric neurologist. “They also prevent moderate to more serious injuries, like bruising of the brain tissue itself. Helmets cushion the brain to prevent a more serious and possibly permanent brain injury.” Most moderate-to-severe head injuries can be prevented by wearing a helmet that absorbs much of the force of the impact that would otherwise be directed to the head, Taraman explains.

EDUCATION:
Wayne State University School of Medicine, Detroit, Michigan

BOARD CERTIFICATIONS:
Neurology with special qualification in Child Neurology

85-90%
PERCENTAGE BY WHICH HELMET USE IS ESTIMATED TO REDUCE THE RISK OF HEAD INJURY

515,000
# OF BICYCLISTS WHO SUSTAINED BIKE-RELATED INJURIES THAT REQUIRED EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT CARE IN 2010 IN THE U.S.

26,000
OF THESE INJURIES TO KIDS AND ADOLESCENTS WERE TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURIES

TEACH BY EXAMPLE

• Parents should set an example by wearing a helmet when riding a bike, for example, and explaining to their children why it’s important to wear a helmet. “Kids are more likely to wear their helmets if they understand the importance of wearing helmets and see mom and dad wearing theirs too,” Lubahn says.

• Your children are more likely to wear a helmet if they like the way it looks and can select the color or decorate it. Helmets come in many colors and varieties, so let your children pick the ones they like as long as the helmet fits properly, is the right kind for the activity and meets federal standards.

CHILDMREN AND BRAIN INJURIES

A traumatic brain injury can range from a mild injury like a concussion to a very severe injury that can kill or lead to long-term disability. The brain’s chemicals can be disrupted, brain cells and neurons can be injured, and brain tissue can bleed and swell, Taraman says. “A concussion you will get over, but anything more severe to the brain will be permanent. If brain tissue dies, there is no way to bring that back.” Young children are particularly vulnerable. “Because they have a developing brain, the recovery from head injuries takes longer the younger the child is,” says Dr. Taraman.