Emergency medical personnel should immediately treat any serious or potentially serious head injury. Minor head injuries may be cared for at home.

- Bleeding under the scalp, but outside the skull, creates "goose eggs" or large bruises at the site of a head injury. They are common and will go away on their own with time. Using ice immediately after the trauma may help decrease their size.
  - Do not apply ice directly to the skin. Ice should be applied for 20-30 minutes at a time and can be repeated about every 2-4 hours as needed. There is little benefit after 24 hours.
  - Use a light washcloth as a barrier and wrap the ice in it. You can also use a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in cloth. This conforms nicely to the shape of the head.
  - Make your own ice pack by adding 1/3 cup of 70% isopropyl alcohol (the green-colored kind is best to help identify it later) to 2/3 cup of water in a zip-lock-style bag (double bag it to prevent leaking). The mixture turns into "slush." Freeze this homemade ice pack for use when needed. Caution: If you have small children in your home, watch them carefully when using the ice pack. Drinking the mixture can be poisonous.
  - Commercially available ice packs use chemicals to create cold. They are designed to be kept in a first-aid kit and need not be kept frozen. These can be applied directly to the skin, although a barrier can also be used if bleeding is present. They must be disposed of after a single use but can be handy in case of emergencies.

- When a minor head injury results from a fall onto carpet or other soft surface and the height of the fall is less than the height of the person who fell and there is no loss of consciousness (in other words, the person was not "knocked out"), a doctor's visit is not usually needed. Apply ice to lessen swelling.
Medical Treatment

Treatment varies widely depending on the type and severity of injuries.

- Minor head injuries are often treated at home as long as someone is available to watch the person.
  - Bed rest, fluids, and a mild pain reliever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, for example) may be prescribed. Ice may be applied to the scalp for pain relief and to decrease swelling.
  - Cuts will be numbed with a medication usually given by injection. They will then be cleansed. The doctor will then look for foreign matter and hidden injuries. The wound usually is closed with skin staples, stitches (sutures), or a special skin glue. A tetanus shot will be given if it has been more than five to 10 years since your last booster.

- People with serious closed head injuries are almost always admitted to the hospital for observation and repeated studies to assure that the condition does not worsen.
  - Occasionally a head injury may cause elevated pressure within the skull. An intracranial pressure (ICP) monitor probe may be surgically inserted into the brain through the skull to measure the pressure. If the pressure rises too high, it may be necessary to do surgery to decompress the brain. Death is possible.
  - Medication to prevent seizures may be given to prevent or treat seizures that occur from the head injury. Seizures after head injury often do not require treatment because they may not reoccur.
  - Antibiotics are usually not required in closed head injuries. Some doctors use antibiotics in all cases of basilar skull fracture. Other doctors do not feel this is useful.

- When there is a closed head injury with bleeding inside the skull, the doctor must consider a number of factors to determine the correct treatment. Some of these include the location of the bleeding, severity of the symptoms, any other injuries, and progression of symptoms. Surgery may be needed. Other options include pressure monitors, medication to prevent seizures, and antibiotics to prevent infection. People with this type of injury may need a breathing tube inserted (intubation) to help prevent further brain injury. Angiography may be performed.

- Penetrating head injuries often require some sort of surgery, usually to remove foreign material or to stop bleeding. Other options include pressure monitors, medication to prevent seizures, and antibiotics to prevent infection. People with this type of injury may need a breathing tube inserted to help prevent further brain injury. Angiography may be performed.