

This past football season, my 11-year-old son was injured when a teammate accidentally "kicked" him in the back of the head with his knee. He was able to walk off the field, but was clearly "shaken-up". As my child was transported to the ER he complained of a headache, sensitivity to light and he was disoriented. About two hours later, the physician completed his assessment and determined that my son sustained a concussion but was no longer symptomatic. As a precaution, however, he recommended a CT scan to rule-out any bleeding inside his skull. My inclination was to decline the procedure.

Q's: Why subject my son's brain to radiation (a CT scan) when he "seems OK"? Was this an unfounded concern, given the minimal exposure? Would I be increasing the likelihood of cancer in the future?

A's: A CT scan will determine if there is a bleed inside the skull. Rarely do you have to obtain a CT scan unless you have good cause. In this case, the fact that he had become asymptomatic, a CT scan was probably not necessary. You do not want to have that one case where you miss a bleed. You need to treat each case individually and if you have any inclination to rule out a bleed get the CT scan. Obviously we want to limit the amount of radiation for our kids. It is impossible to determine if one CT scan of the head will increase the risk for him to get cancer.