

Head-banging, especially when the child is mad or frustrated, is very common in children.*Up to 20 percent of healthy children bang their heads during a temper tantrum at one time or another. Head banging appears in the last half of the first year of life and generally ends spontaneously by 4 years of age. Boys are three or four times more likely to be head-bangers than girls.

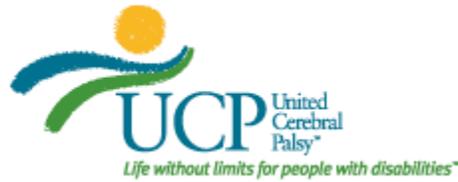
For **some children** head-banging is a way to release tension and prepare for sleep. Some kids bang the head out of frustration or anger, as in a temper tantrum. Head-banging is an effective attention-seeking maneuver. The more reaction children get from parents or other adults, the more likely they are to continue this habit.

Parents of children who bang their head worry that their child's habit will cause brain damage or that it is a sign of autism. Head-banging, head-rolling and body rocking are each far more common in autistic children. But these rhythmic motor activities are also typical behaviors in healthy infants and young children. Any child who is still head-banging beyond 4 years of age deserve further evaluation, especially if there is an associated speech problem..



Fortunately, children who bang their heads to gain attention do not injure themselves from this habit. The pain probably prevents them from banging too hard and at their young age can not generate enough force to hurt themselves. Studies have shown that most of these children are actually above average intelligence.

Most children will outgrow the habit on their own. Parents can speed up this process by using the two "I's" of discipline...Ignore or isolate. Pretend not to notice and do not give the child what he/she wants to stop the head banging. It is simply part of the temper tantrum. If you can not ignore it, simply put the child in another room and walk out, allowing him/her to bang away without getting the attention he/she wants. Once the child realizes that he/she will not get what he/she wants or the attention from his or her habit, he/she will outgrow it and stop on their own.



Living with Children: Head Banging

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