Occipital Condyle Fracture

What are Occipital Condyles?
Your occipital condyles are two bony surfaces at the base of your skull. This is where your skull meets the first bone (vertebra) of your spine. This part of your body is full of muscles and ligaments. They keep your head upright and moving as it should. This place has all the nerves running through it that are responsible for all your body’s functions.

What does it mean to fracture this bone?
Fractures of this bone can be either linear or compressed. A linear fracture is like a crack in a wall. Linear fractures are most often very stable. They just need time to heal. A compressed fracture is like a wall that has a place pushed in. Compressed fractures may cause damage to other tissues nearby. You may need surgery to repair it.

Treatment
If you have a fracture of your occipital condyle, you may need to wear a PMT collar (neck brace) or a “halo” brace. The brace keeps your neck stable and allows your bones to heal. Although you may not have a neck injury, the brace helps by keeping the weight of your head off of the bones where your head and neck meet. The brace is a key factor in letting the fractures heal properly. It prevents any injury to the spinal cord that runs through this site. A spinal cord injury in that site might cause paralysis and even death. For this reason, it is very important to follow your health care team’s instructions in wearing your brace and caring for yourself.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 11/2015 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6896