Emergency Department

Advice after your child’s head injury
Information for parents and carers
Your doctor or nurse practitioner has examined your child and is happy for them to go home. When you get your child home it is very unlikely that they will have any further problems. **However, you should not leave your child alone for the first 24 hours.** You can let them sleep as they would do normally, but check on them every hour or so. If you are unable to stay with them, please make sure that another responsible adult is with your child.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Signs to look out for</th>
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<td>Most head injuries do not lead to serious complications. However, if your child experiences any of the following symptoms, you should immediately go to your nearest emergency department:</td>
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<td>• becoming unconsciousness or a lack of full consciousness (e.g. problems keeping eyes open)</td>
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<td>• drowsiness (feeling sleepy) that goes on for longer than 1 hour, when they would normally be wide awake</td>
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<td>• confusion (e.g. not knowing where they are, getting things muddled up)</td>
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<td>• difficult to wake</td>
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<td>• three or more episodes of vomiting (each vomit must be separated by 30 minutes, to count as a new episode)</td>
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<td>• problems understanding or speaking</td>
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<td>• loss of balance or problems walking</td>
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<td>• weakness in one or both arms or legs</td>
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<td>• a seizure or fit (including collapsing or passing out suddenly)</td>
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<td>• changes in your child’s eyesight</td>
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<td>• severe or worsening headache that won’t go away, despite taking painkillers (a mild headache is normal)</td>
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<td>• clear fluid or blood coming out of your child’s ears or nose</td>
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<td>• new deafness in one or both ears.</td>
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Returning to normal

It is normal for your child to experience the following symptoms over the next few days after their head injury. These symptoms should disappear within two weeks. If they don’t, or you are concerned about how your child is feeling, please take them to see their GP.

- a mild headache. It is safe to give your child painkillers, such as paracetamol. Please read and follow the dosage instructions on the packet carefully.
- feeling sick (but not being sick) or a lack of appetite. This can be helped by taking regular sips of clear fluids, such as water.
- feeling dizzy
- problems concentrating or with their memory lasting less than 5 minutes
- feeling tired, being irritable or having a bad temper.

General advice

The following advice should help your child to get better more quickly and may relieve some of the symptoms mentioned above.

- Encourage plenty of rest.
- Avoid stressful situations and playing vigorous games, as this can make your child’s symptoms worse.
- Do not allow your child to return to school until they feel completely better.
- Do not let them work on a computer, play computer games or use hand held devices (such as tablets or smartphones) until they are completely recovered. Concentrating on a screen may make their symptoms worse.
- They should not play any contact sports for at least three weeks and without talking to their GP first.
- Allow your child to nap and sleep as normal, but if you are concerned, attempt to wake your child enough so you are reassured that they can be woken easily.
Long-term problems
Most children recover quickly from their accident and experience no long-term problems. However, please contact your child’s GP if they are still experiencing problems two weeks after their accident or if they develop new problems after a few weeks or months. Their GP can make sure they are recovering properly.

How to contact us
If you have any questions or concerns within the first 24 hours after your child has left hospital, please contact us.

Minor Injuries, Emergency Department
John Radcliffe Hospital
Tel: 01865 220 212

Alternatively, or more than 24 hours after leaving hospital, you can contact your GP or NHS 111 (Freephone) for urgent advice.

Further information
More information about head injuries can be found online at:
http://patient.info/health/head-injury-instructions

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221 473 or email PALS@ouh.nhs.uk

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