

Advice after a head injury

Information for patients



Your doctor or nurse practitioner has examined you and is happy for you to go home. **However, for the first 24 hours at home you should have a responsible adult with you, who has read this information sheet.**

Most head injuries do not lead to serious complications. However, if you experience any of the following symptoms, you should go immediately to your nearest emergency department.

- severe or worsening headache (a mild headache is normal after a head injury)
- vomiting (being sick)
- confusion or feeling unusually sleepy
- fits (collapsing or passing out suddenly)
- any change to your eyesight
- dizziness or lack of co-ordination
- weakness in one or both of your arms or legs
- clear fluid or blood coming out of your ears or nose
- new deafness in one or both ears
- inability to remember what has happened (amnesia).

What you should not worry about

It is normal after a head injury to experience the following symptoms over the next few days.

- Mild headache. It is safe to take a painkiller such as paracetamol. (Please see the instructions on the packet for advice about how much to take and how often.)
- Feeling sick (without vomiting) or not feeling hungry. This can be helped by drinking clear fluids (such as water) and avoiding drinking alcohol.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Feeling more tired, which might then make you irritable or anxious.

These symptoms should disappear over the next two weeks.

However, if they don't or you are concerned about how you are feeling, please see your GP.

General advice

If you follow this advice you should get better more quickly and may relieve some of your symptoms.

- Try to avoid stressful situations as these can make any symptoms worse.
- Do not return to your normal school, college or work activity until you feel you have completely recovered.
- You should not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery for at least 24 hours after your accident.
- Do not work on a computer or play computer games until you have completely recovered, as spending time concentrating on images or text on a screen may make your symptoms worse.
- Your ability to tolerate alcohol is reduced after a head injury, so you should not drink alcohol until you are completely recovered.
- Do not play any contact sports for at least 3 weeks and without talking to your doctor first.

More information about head injuries can be found online at:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-injury-minor/Pages/Introduction.aspx
www.patient.co.uk/health/head-injury-instructions

Long-term problems

Most people recover quickly from their accident and experience no long-term problems.

However, please contact your GP if you:

- are still experiencing problems two weeks after your accident
- are concerned as to whether you are fit to drive a car or motorbike
- develop new problems after a few weeks or months

They can make sure that you are recovering properly.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Emergency Department

John Radcliffe Hospital Tel: **01865 220 224**

Emergency Department

Horton General Hospital Tel: **01295 229 412**

Alternatively you can contact your GP or NHS 111 (Freephone), for emergency advice.

Reference

The information in this leaflet is based upon guidance from the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE 2014).

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 **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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August 2014
Review: August 2017
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www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/leaflets/library.aspx

