

***Going home
after a head injury***

***Information for
children, parents and carers***



**Emergency Department
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital**

We have assessed your child after their head injury and they are now fit to leave hospital. This leaflet explains about what to expect at home, guidance on when to seek further help, and advice on how to help their recovery.

Head injuries are a very common in children and most will have mild symptoms that clear up quickly or no symptoms at all.

Although your child is ready to leave hospital, an adult must regularly observe them during the first 24 hours after their injury.

Common symptoms after a head injury

It is normal after a head injury to have a mild headache.

Symptoms of concussion are common and include:

- Feeling nauseated (feeling sick)
- Poor appetite
- Change in mood – often irritability or bad temper
- Tiredness and altered sleep pattern
- Feeling lightheaded and dizzy

The symptoms of concussion usually get worse you're your child is under stress or having to concentrate.

Following a head injury we would expect these symptoms to settle within 2 weeks. If your child's symptoms are not getting better, contact your GP. They can review your child and arrange any follow-up they may need.

When should I seek further help?

If your child develops any of the following symptoms, take your child directly to the nearest Emergency Department or call 999.

- Your child becomes unusually drowsy, sleepy or difficult to fully wake up.
- Persistent or worsening headache, despite regular painkillers.
- Ongoing vomiting.
- Any new loss of function in the arms (for example, unable to hold things) or the legs (such as difficulty walking).
- Your child describes changes in their vision.
- Your child becomes clumsy, poorly coordinated or has difficulty with balance.
- Your child seems confused (not knowing where they are or getting things muddled up).
- Fluid or blood coming from their ear or nose.
- Fits (convulsions or seizures) or collapses.
- There is a noticeable change in behaviour or personality.
- If your child is less than one year old, please consider anything that is different from normal, such as changes in feeding, crying etc.

What can I do to help with their recovery?

It is important for your child to rest. Minimise strenuous activity and screen time, particularly in the first 24 hours.

You can give your child painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen and make sure they keep well hydrated.

These actions will not mask (hide) any significant symptoms, but may prevent concussive symptoms from developing or progressing.

It is common for children to be tired after a head injury and it is okay to allow them to sleep. We suggest checking them occasionally to stimulate them and check their response in the first 24 hours after their injury.

Can my child go to school?

If your child has **no symptoms** they do not need to take time off school or education.

If they **do have symptoms**, they may benefit from a short absence. This is usually no more than a few days.

When your child does return to school, it is important to let school staff know about your child's injury, so they can monitor your child's progress.

We recommend that any child who has symptoms of concussion should follow the “**After Concussion, Return to Normality**” (ACoRN) guidance. This gives a step-by-step guide to returning to school and normal activities.

Below is the QR Code and web page link with more information:



 www.childbraininjurytrust.org.uk/after-concussion-return-to-normality-acorn/

When can my child return to sports and activities?

Children can gradually return to normal levels of activity as their symptoms improve. Returning to sports and exercise should only start after their symptoms have completely resolved and your child has managed a full return to education.

Most children can return to non-contact sports relatively quickly. Be guided by their symptoms, rather than by a specific time frame.

Return to contact sports (such as football, rugby or hockey) should be phased. National guidance recommends waiting 23 days for those under 19 years with a concussive head injury.

Below is the QR Code and web page link with more information from Sport Scotland Concussion Guidance “If In Doubt, Sit Them Out”:



📄 <https://sportscotland.org.uk/clubs/scottish-sports-concussion-guidance/>

Useful resources

The NHS Inform website (www.nhsinform.scot) has a detailed section on head injury.

You can find further support and information about longer-term issues after a head injury on the Child Brain Injury Trust website:

📄 www.childbraininjurytrust.org.uk.

The charity also have a free phone app called “CBIT in Hand” which you can download from your app provider or you can use the QR code below:



Contact number

The Emergency Department is open 24 hours a day if you have any concerns.

**Emergency Department
Royal Aberdeen Children’s Hospital**

☎ 01224 552041

This leaflet is also available in larger print.

Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. Please call Quality Development on 01224 554149 for a copy. Ask for leaflet 2140.

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet. If you have any comments on how we can improve it, please call us on 01224 554149 to let us know.

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