

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.

Please note that NHS Grampian is not responsible or liable for the quality of the information, resources or maintenance of external websites. Any advice on external websites is not intended to replace a consultation with an appropriately qualified medical practitioner.

After Concussion, Return to Normality (ACoRN)

Expected signs of concussion

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Feeling sick
- Poor concentration
- Poor balance/coordination
- Sensitivity to light or noise

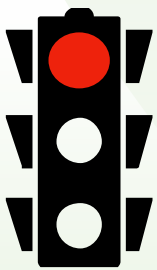


Please give regular pain relief for the next 24 hours and consider giving for up to 1 week. (For doses follow guidance on medicine packaging).

The traffic light system below gives a step by step guide on how to manage the expected signs of concussion detailed below.

- You can move forward to the next stage when you have been symptom free for 24 hours.
- If symptoms re-appear then please move back to the previous stage to help relieve symptoms.
- If symptoms become worse at any point, then please contact either your GP, NHS24 (111) or, if urgent care required, call 999.
- If you still have symptoms after 2 weeks, please see your own GP

For return to sport, we recommend a minimum of 2 weeks rest. You can access this guidance from **"If in doubt, sit them out"** (Or scan the QR code).



STOP and rest both body and mind

OK to try

- Board games
- Short telephone conversations
- Light crafts

Not yet

- No screen time (TV, computer games, mobile phones, tablets etc)
- No school
- No sports/physical play
- No reading

If no concussion signs for 24 hours, then please move to the amber stage



REST, but preparing to move

OK to try

- Light reading
- Limited TV
- Short visits from friends
- 30 mins of school work
- short walks

Not yet

- No school yet
- Avoid computers and computer games
- No sports/physical play

If no concussion signs for 24 hours, then please move to the green stage. If signs return, go back to previous stage.



RETURNING to normal learning activities

OK to try

- Phased return to school (perhaps half days or 3-5 days attendance as tolerated)
- Phased return to homework: beginning at 30 mins and increasing

Not yet

- No sports/physical play for 2 weeks post injury
- No tests/exams until full phased transition back to education
- No technical subjects (Home Economics/Technical/Science) for 2 weeks

Discuss with your child and agree when phased return to normality is completed. If this is taking more than two weeks, please see your own GP.

Information for parents and guardians after a Head Injury

Following a head injury an adult should supervise your child for the next 24 hours. They should also receive regular pain relief (for example, Paracetamol). If you are concerned that they are developing a problem, please telephone this Emergency Department and, if necessary, bring them back to hospital.

The signs that you should look out for are:

- If your child becomes unusually sleepy or is hard to wake up
- Headache all the time, which painkillers don't help.
- Repeated vomiting
- Weakness of arms or legs, e.g. unable to hold things
- Difficulty in seeing, walking, or acts clumsy and uncoordinated.
- Confusion (not knowing where they are, getting things muddled up).
- Fluid or blood coming from ear or nose.
- Fits (convulsions or seizures)
- Any other abnormal behaviour.

Allow your child to sleep as normal. We would encourage you to check on them a couple of times overnight to check:

- Do they appear to be breathing normally?
- Are they sleeping in a normal posture?
- Do they make the expected response when you rouse them gently?
(E.g. pulling up sheets, cuddling teddy-bear)
- If you cannot satisfy yourself that your child is sleeping normally, then waken them fully to check.

If you have any concerns about any of the above please contact the Emergency Department.

The vast majority of children who receive this advice leaflet will not develop signs of concussion. However, if signs of concussion are apparent after the first 24 hours, please use the guidance overleaf.

For further advice, information and support around Childhood Acquired Brain Injury, please also contact the **Child Brain Injury Trust** online at childbraininjurytrust.org.uk or via email: info@cbituk.org