

Emergency Department Online

CHILD HEAD INJURY

Your child has suffered a head injury and has been assessed as safe to go home. Most head injuries in children are minor and do not cause any long term problems. This leaflet explains what you can expect after a minor head injury, how you can help your child recover, and when to seek further medical attention.

General care advice

- Supervise your child closely for the first 24 hours after the injury
- Allow plenty of rest and a gradual return to normal activities
- Offer paracetamol or ibuprofen for pain (do not exceed the recommended dose)
- Ensure they are drinking enough fluids
- Minimise screen time (TV, phones, tablets, games) during recovery
- Avoid stressful or noisy environments while recovering
- No contact sports (e.g. football, rugby) for at least 2 weeks after symptoms have resolved. Discuss with your child's school and sports club regarding a Gradual Return To Play (GRTP).
- Return to school or nursery when symptoms have fully resolved
- Speak with the teachers if symptoms persist when your child is returning to school

What to expect after a minor head injury

The following symptoms are common after a minor head injury. They may be a sign of a mild concussion but should settle within two weeks. If these symptoms do not improve or you have any concerns, speak with your primary care doctor.

- Mild headache or dizziness
- Feeling sick (without vomiting)
- Poor concentration
- Irritability
- Tiredness or problems sleeping
- Lack of appetite

When to return to the emergency department:

If your child develops any of the following symptoms, you should return to the nearest Emergency Department. These symptoms may indicate a more serious condition which requires urgent attention.

- Vomiting repeatedly. More than two vomits, with at least 10 minutes between each episode, is a concerning symptom. Multiple vomits in one go only count as one episode.
- Seizures or fitting
- Clear fluid or blood coming from the nose or ears
- A worsening headache that doesn't improve with painkillers
- Becoming confused or unaware of surroundings
- Loss of consciousness, drowsiness or difficulty waking
- Slurred speech or difficulty understanding language
- Vision or hearing problems
- Weakness in arms or legs, or loss of balance
- Not waking for feeds (infants) or constant crying and cannot be soothed

Sleeping

It is common for a child to feel sleepy after a head injury. If you are concerned that they are abnormally drowsy, you can wake your child up an hour or so after sleeping. They may be grumpy when you wake them, which is a reassuring sign. After this you may allow them to go back to sleep.

Concussion

Symptoms of a concussion include feeling sick (without vomiting), mild headache, irritability, poor concentration, tiredness, lack of appetite and problems sleeping. These can last for a few days and normally settle within two weeks.

9 out of 10 children with concussion recover fully. However, some children may have symptoms which persist a little longer (weeks or even months).

A second injury before full recovery can lead to longer-term problems. It is therefore important that your child should follow a gradual return to activities and consult a doctor before resuming contact sports.

The following resource provides more advice on concussion in children and young people: [The Children's Trust | Concussion in children and young people](#)



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