

Patient Information

Children's Head Injury Advice

We have assessed the head injury of the baby, child or young person you are caring for and it's very unlikely to cause worrying symptoms in the coming days. It is safe to leave hospital, but do not leave them alone for the first 24 hours after they leave hospital. Also, make sure there's a telephone nearby for the first 24 to 48 hours in case you need to access emergency medical help. They should not cycle, use a scooter or skateboard, or do any similar activities until they feel completely better.

Take them to the nearest hospital emergency department as soon as possible, if they develop any of these symptoms:

- unconsciousness or lack of full consciousness (for example, a problem keeping their eyes open)
- drowsiness (feeling sleepy) that lasts longer than 1 hour when they would normally be wide awake
- difficulty waking them up
- problems understanding or speaking
- loss of orientation (not knowing where they are, what time it is, who they're with and what's going on)
- loss of balance or problems walking
- weakness in 1 or more arms or legs
- problems with their eyesight
- a painful headache that will not ease or go away
- vomiting (being sick)
- seizures (also called convulsions or fits)
- clear fluid coming out of their ears or nose
- bleeding from 1 or both ears.

If they are unwell, take them to the emergency department or call 111 or 999.

Symptoms not usually of concern

The baby, child or young person may develop other symptoms over the next few days that should disappear in the next 2 weeks without the need for further treatment in hospital. These include: a mild headache, feeling sick (without being sick), dizziness, irritability or bad temper, problems concentrating, problems with memory, tiredness, lack of appetite, problems sleeping.

You should take them to see to their doctor if you are very concerned about any of these symptoms in the first few days after they have left hospital or if the symptoms have not gone away after 2 weeks.

What can help after a head injury?

Make sure the baby, child or young person rests for 2 to 3 days. Then, they can gradually return to normal activities, such as school or college. Be guided by their symptoms. If their symptoms get worse, they should go back to a level of activity that was manageable. They can slowly return to light, non-contact exercise after a few days of rest or once their symptoms are better.

They should avoid contact sports, such as football, rugby, boxing or martial arts, for at least 3 to 4 weeks after the head injury. They should not take any alcohol or illegal drugs. Do not give them sleeping pills, sedatives or tranquilisers unless they've been prescribed them by a doctor.

Long-term problems

Most people recover quickly from a head injury and do not have any long-term problems. But some people take longer to recover, or develop problems after weeks or months. These problems could include but are not limited to fatigue, dizziness, or problems with coordination, memory or vision. Or, in a baby, they could include irritability, excessive crying, changes in feed or sleeping habits, and loss of interest in people or objects. This is sometimes called post-concussion syndrome. Some people develop problems with their hormones after a head injury. This can cause fatigue, low mood, unexpected slow growth, later puberty or irregular periods (if previously regular). These may occur several months or years after the injury. Take your baby, child or young person to see their doctor if they have any of these problems or do not get better within 2 weeks.

You can find further support and information from the Child Brain Injury Trust: <https://childbraininjurytrust.org.uk/>

Sport related concussion information can be found here

<https://sportandrecreation.org.uk/policy/research-publications/concussion-guidelines>

ED Advice Ref.	Child Head Injury (NICE)	Date of Issue	Apr 2017
Version	3.0	Date of Last Review	Dec 2023
Prepared by	M.Rennie		