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Head Injury Discharge Advice

***Information for
patients and carers***

**Emergency Department
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary**

You, or someone you care for, has been checked following a head injury.

This leaflet gives you important information about what to expect after a head injury. It explains when to seek further help and gives advice about how to support recovery.

Head injuries are very common. Most people have mild symptoms that improve quickly.

We are happy for you to go home. You should tell a responsible adult that you have been to the Emergency Department with a head injury. They should stay with you, or keep in close contact with you, for the first 24 hours after your injury.

Common symptoms after a head injury

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

Symptoms of concussion are common and include:

- Feeling nauseated (sick)
- Poor appetite
- Changes in mood – often feeling more irritable or emotional
- Tiredness and difficulty sleeping
- Sensitivity to noise or light
- Feeling lightheaded or dizzy

These symptoms can feel worse when you are trying to concentrate or when you feel stressed.

After a head injury, we would expect these symptoms to settle within two weeks.

If symptoms are not improving after this time, please contact your GP. They can arrange a review and any follow-up you may need.

When should I seek further help?

If you notice any of the following symptoms, go to the nearest Emergency Department or call 999.

- Unusual drowsiness or sleepiness, or difficulty waking up
- Persistent or worsening headache, despite regular painkillers
- More than one episode of vomiting
- Loss of movement in your arms or legs
- Changes in vision
- Worsening co-ordination or balance
- New confusion
- Fluid or blood coming from your ear or nose
- Fits (convulsions or seizures) or collapses
- A noticeable change in behaviour or personality

What can I do to help with recovery?

It is important that you take time to rest.

- Limit strenuous activity and screen time, especially in the first 24 hours
- Try to avoid any stressful situations
- Take painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen if needed
- Keep well hydrated by drinking water

Avoid contact sports for at least three weeks.

Avoid alcohol or any non-prescribed sedative medication until your symptoms have resolved.

Avoid strenuous physical activity and driving until you are symptom-free.

Even if there are no obvious signs of injury, you may find it harder to concentrate than normal. Concussion symptoms are often made worse by concentration and stress. This may be more noticeable at work, when studying or during emotional stress.

Be patient when returning to normal activities and increase them gradually. Your brain needs time to heal.

If your symptoms get worse, stop what you are doing and rest until you feel better. Restart activities slowly.

When can I return to sports and activities?

In most cases, you can return to non-contact sports quite quickly. Go by how you feel rather than by a specific timeframe.

Wait at least three weeks before doing contact sports such as football, rugby, or hockey.

Useful Resources

The NHS Inform – information on head injury

www.nhsinform.scot



Sport Scotland Concussion Guidance - 'If In Doubt, Sit Them Out'

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

Headway - Headaches after Brain Injury

<https://www.headway.org.uk/media/12056/headaches-after-brain-injury-publication.pdf>

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

 (01224) 550506 

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