

# Head injury and concussion

Most head injuries are not serious. You do not usually need to go to hospital and should make a full recovery within 2 weeks.

## Go to the emergency department (ED) after a head injury if you or your child:

- were knocked out but woke up
- have been vomiting since the injury
- have a headache that does not go away with painkillers
- have a change in behaviour, such as being more irritable
- have problems with memory or thinking
- were drinking alcohol or taking drugs just before the injury
- have a blood-clotting disorder (such as haemophilia)
- take a blood thinner (such as warfarin)
- had brain surgery in the past

You or your child could have concussion. Symptoms usually start within 24 hours but sometimes may not appear for up to 3 weeks.

## Call 112 or 999 if someone has hit their head and:

- is knocked out and has not woken up
- cannot stay awake or keep their eyes open
- has a fit (seizure)
- has problems with their vision
- has clear fluid coming from their ears or nose
- bleeds from their ears or has bruising behind their ears
- has numbness or weakness in part of their body
- has problems with walking, balance, understanding, speaking or writing
- hit their head in a serious accident, such as a car crash

# How to treat a minor head injury

If you do not need to go to hospital, you can usually look after yourself or your child at home.

It's normal to have symptoms for up to 2 weeks. For example, a slight headache or feeling sick.

## Do

- ✓ hold an ice pack (or a bag of frozen peas in a tea towel) to the injury regularly for short periods in the first few days to bring down any swelling
- ✓ rest and avoid stress - you or your child do not need to stay awake if you're tired
- ✓ limit things that make your symptoms worse - for example if you have a headache, fatigue or poor concentration after an activity
- ✓ consider reducing screen time from computer, TV or phone
- ✓ take paracetamol to relieve pain or a headache - do not use ibuprofen or aspirin as they could cause the injury to bleed
- ✓ make sure an adult stays with you or your child for at least the first 24 hours

## Don't

- ✗ do not go back to work or school until you feel better
- ✗ do not drive until you feel fully recovered
- ✗ do not play contact sports for at least 3 weeks - children should avoid rough play for a few days
- ✗ do not take drugs or drink alcohol until you feel better
- ✗ do not take sleeping pills while you're recovering - unless a doctor advises you to

## Contact a GP if:

- your or your child's symptoms last more than 2 weeks
- you're not sure if it's safe for you to drive or return to work, school or sports

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