

Patient information

Head injury in children

Following your child's recent head injury and assessment/admission in hospital, the doctor and/or nurse practitioner has examined your child and they are now ready for discharge home. Within the first 24 hours at home, your child should be monitored by a responsible adult at all times. This information leaflet will explain common symptoms, things to look out for and recovery, returning to school and other activities, and contact details for further information or support.

Common symptoms following a head injury

- Headache
- Tiredness or poor sleep
- Dizziness
- Poor concentration
- Short term memory loss
- Irritability or being easily annoyed
- Nausea (without vomiting) or not feeling hungry.

These symptoms should disappear over the next two weeks. Treat headaches with pain relief such as paracetamol according to the packet instructions.

Things to look out for:

If your child complains of or displays any of these symptoms, or you are worried in any way, please contact your local emergency department:

- Severe or increasing headache
- Vomiting
- Persistent sleepiness or hard to wake
- Increasing irritability or confusion
- Changes to vision



- Slurred speech
- Unsteady walk
- Seizure or sudden collapse
- Weakness in one or both arms or legs
- Clear fluid coming out of their ears or nose

It is safe to allow your child to sleep, however you may be reassured by the ability to rouse them twice during the night. Do not confuse normal sleep with unconsciousness. If you find you are unable to wake your child, dial 999 for an ambulance stating that you have an unconscious child following a head injury.

General advice

If you follow this advice your child should get better more quickly and it may relieve some of their symptoms:

- Try to avoid stressful and noisy situations, such as having lots of visitors
- Avoid playing on computer games or watching television until you have completely recovered
- Rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Administer pain relief for mild headaches (paracetamol)

Recovery

Many children do not have any long term problems following a head injury, but some children may develop the following:

- Altered behaviour
- Poor concentration
- Poor memory
- Excessive tiredness
- Continuing headaches

If any of these occur it is important to recognise that they may be due to the head injury and you should discuss these with your child's GP to ensure appropriate support and management.

Returning to school or nursery

As a parent or carer, you will be more aware of what your child is capable of doing with regard to returning to school, and it is dependent on whether they have any of the common symptoms following a head injury. You may find it beneficial for them to return gradually, starting with a few hours each day and then gradually building up to full days. It is important that you raise awareness of your child's head injury with the school, particularly with their teachers.

Other activities

We encourage you to allow your child to return to normal activities they were doing prior to the head injury as soon as they are able. Please note, however, that caution should be taken with the following due to the high risk of sustaining a second head injury:

- Contact sports
- Diving
- Climbing above 3ft.

These should be avoided where possible for at least 3 months following a head injury. Your child's doctor may advise avoiding these activities for longer if your child has had a more severe head injury.

Your child should always wear a safety helmet whilst riding a bike, scooter, motorcycle or horse.

It is not advised that you allow your child to go swimming without full adult supervision following a head injury.

Further resources

Child Brain Injury Trust (CBIT)
0303 303 2248

NHS Choices

Headway
0115 924 0800

Brain and Spine Foundation
0808 808 1000

The Child Head Injury Trust
01865 552467

Patient Advice and Liaison Service

If you need general information or advice about Trust services, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 020 3594 2040 or visit www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals. Alternatively please contact staff who are providing your care if you require clinical advice.

Large print and other languages

For this leaflet in large print, please speak to your clinical team.

For help interpreting this leaflet in other languages, please ring 020 8223 8934.

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