

Manchester Royal Infirmary

Information for Patients

Mild Head Injury Patient Advice Leaflet

You have been diagnosed with a mild head injury. This leaflet gives you information and advice on what to do and what may happen after a mild head injury. Please follow the instructions and advice in this leaflet which will help you to recover from this injury.

Give this leaflet to a household member, family or friend who can be with you for the first 24 hours following a mild head injury. Make sure a telephone and medical help are within easy reach.

What is a mild head injury?

A mild head injury can occur following any injury to the head. It is usually nothing to worry about. There may be no injury visible to the head and most people will not have any symptoms after a head injury. A small number of people will have symptoms after a mild head injury due to brain function being temporarily affected, this is called a concussion.

What are the symptoms of concussion?

Concussion can develop straight away or after a few days following a mild head injury. The following are symptoms that you may experience:

- A mild headache
- Feeling sick (without vomiting)
- Dizziness
- Lack of appetite
- Tiredness and problems sleeping
- Problems concentrating or memory problems
- Irritability or feeling low in mood
- Sensitivity to bright lights or loud noises

These symptoms are common, and you do not need to come back to hospital if you have any of them. These symptoms usually settle quickly within a few days following a concussion but can last up to two weeks. It is unusual for a concussion to cause long term problems. If symptoms persist for more than two weeks or you have any concerns about your symptoms, then please see your GP about them.

Sometimes symptoms can develop after a few weeks or months. If you feel that things are not quite right (for example memory problems or not feeling yourself), then please contact your GP to make sure that you are recovering from your head injury properly.

Things that will help you feel better

Take complete rest in the first two days following a concussion. Your brain needs time to get better.

As symptoms improve, you can gradually increase the amount of activity that you do at home. If symptoms get worse, then reduce activity as you may be pushing yourself too hard.

You can take paracetamol if you have a headache. Avoid other medications unless advised by a doctor, especially medications that make you feel drowsy, such as sedatives.

Things that you should avoid

AVOID stressful situations or situations which need lots of concentration or are very physical.

Minimise reading and screen time for the first two days as it will help you get better.

AVOID alcohol or recreational drugs until you feel better as they will make you feel worse.

DO NOT drive a car, motorcycle, or bicycle for at least 24 hours. Only start driving once you have completely recovered and feel able to do so safely. If you are not sure, please speak to your GP.

AVOID any situation which could cause further head injury, this includes contact sport (e.g., football, rugby), for a minimum of two weeks.

If you do play sport, then you must speak to your GP before playing.

DO NOT return to full time work or education until you have fully recovered and are able to do everyday activities at home. Some people need a day or two off to help get better. Consider reduced hours or duties.

For more information on return to work, please see the Headway website (link below).

When to come back to the emergency department or urgently see a doctor

It is rare for a head injury to get worse after discharge from hospital. If you get any of the following symptoms, then please return to your nearest hospital emergency department as soon as possible:

- Unconsciousness or cannot be fully woken up
- drowsiness (feeling sleepy) when you would normally be wide awake
- New confusion
- loss of balance or weakness in one or more arms or legs
- Any new problems with your eyesight or speech
- A painful headache that will not go away after simple pain killers such as paracetamol
- vomiting (being sick) more than once
- Having a seizure or collapsing
- clear fluid coming out of your ear or nose
- bleeding from one or both ears.

Additional support

You can find further support and information from:

Headway (The brain injury association):
<https://www.headway.org.uk/home.aspx>

NHS website – head injury and concussion
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-injury-and-concussion/>

Contact information

MRI Emergency Department
 0161 276 4147
Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9WL