
PATIENT INFORMATION – HEAD INJURY (ADULT)

Following your head injury **you should not be alone for the next 24 hours.**

Head injuries can range from mild to severe and have a range of symptoms such as:

- a mild headache
- nausea (feeling sick)
- mild dizziness
- mild blurred vision
- concussion – a sudden, but short lived, loss of mental function
- fits or seizures – when the body suddenly moves uncontrollably
- difficulty speaking or staying awake
- problems with the senses, such as loss of hearing or double vision
- repeated vomiting
- blood or clear fluid coming from the ears or nose
- memory loss (amnesia)

How has my head injury been classed?

Your head injury will have been assessed by your healthcare professionals using the Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS). This is a scale from 3 to 15 that is used to identify how serious the injury is and how severely the brain has been damaged (with 3 being most severe and 15 least severe).

A head injury is usually classed as being moderate if someone has a GCS score of 9-12 or severe if they have a score of eight or lower.

What to do at home

Ask someone to stay with you for the next 24-48 hours. Ensure you are near a telephone and know how to contact medical help if it is needed

(for example out of hours, nearest hospital). You may feel tired and find it difficult to remember things or to concentrate. These symptoms are common after a head injury. Watching the television or reading may be difficult for you but this should improve gradually. Please bear in mind that concussion can take weeks or even months to recover from.

Also,

- have plenty of rest and avoid stressful situations
- do not drink alcohol or take recreational drugs
- do not take sleeping pills, sedatives or tranquilizers (unless they are prescribed by your doctor)
- take paracetamol* if you have a mild headache, but avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen and aspirin, unless advised or prescribed by a doctor

If you notice any of the following symptoms you should return to A & E:

- loss of consciousness (either very briefly or for a longer period of time)
- difficulty staying awake or still being sleepy several hours after the injury
- worsening or lasting headache
- vomiting /being sick on more than two separate occasions
- drowsiness or difficulty staying awake when you should normally be awake
- blurred or double vision
- blood or clear fluid leaking from an ear or nose
- weakness in any of your arms or legs
- fits (Convulsions) having a seizure or fit when your body suddenly moves uncontrollably
- irritability or other unusual behaviour
- difficulty speaking, such as slurred speech
- difficulty understanding what people say
- reading or writing problems
- balance problems or difficulty walking
- loss of power in part of the body, such as weakness in an arm or leg
- general weakness
- amnesia (memory loss), such as not being able to remember what happened before or after the injury

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- bruising behind one or both ears
- a lasting headache since the injury
- Any other concern

Recovering from a head injury

When can I return to day to day activities?

You should contact your GP if you do not feel back to your usual self after a week or before if you have any concerns.

The following advice should also be followed:

- not return to work or college until you have completely recovered and feel well enough to do so
- not drive a car or motorbike, ride a bicycle or operate machinery until you feel completely recovered and it is safe and legal to do so
- do not play any contact sport, such as football or rugby, for at least three weeks, and speak to your doctor before you start playing again
- do not drink alcohol or eat heavy meals for a few days

Local Services Information

The NHS Direct Wales website allows you to search for local services in your area, such as hospitals and Pharmacy.

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/localservices/

Choose the service you require and follow the guidance on how to search.

Your head injury today has been classed as :

Further Advice/Instructions

Please use this section to give the patient specific information e.g. follow up appointments or after care advice.

You should be seen in the Accident and Emergency Department in _____ days

You should make an appointment to see your GP in _____ days

***Pain relief advice**

You may have been given some pain relief by the health professionals in the Accident and Emergency Department. If this runs out and you need further pain relief, you can speak to a pharmacist for advice. Some common painkillers are available to buy over the counter, for e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen. Always follow the instructions on the packet if you are taking these, and seek further advice from the pharmacist should you have any concerns, particularly if it is for a child.

Head Injury Support Organisations

Headway - the brain injury association
Headway is a charity set up to give help and support to people affected by brain injury.

Tel: 0115 924 0800

Email: enquiries@headway.org.uk

Website: <http://www.headway.org.uk>

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BASIC (Brain & Spinal Injury Centre)

BASIC offers over 30 rehabilitation services to individuals and families that are largely left to cope on their own with the consequences of brain and spinal injury following discharge from hospital.

Tel: 0161 707 6441

Website: <http://www.basiccharity.org.uk>

Brain and Spine Foundation

The Brain and Spine Foundation works to help people affected by brain and spine conditions as well as offering information to medical and educational professionals dealing with the effects of brain and spine conditions.

Tel: 020 7793 5900

Email: info@brainandspine.org.uk

Website: <http://www.brainandspine.org.uk>



If you become unwell or are injured, choose the right NHS service to make sure you get the best treatment. The Choose Well campaign explains what each NHS service does, and when it should be used.

Choosing well means that you and your family will get the best treatment. It also allows busy NHS services to help the people who need them most.

If you are unsure about which option to choose, please call NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47 or visit the Choose Well website at

www.choosewellwales.org.uk

This information has been produced based on previous information leaflets and the evidence available at the time of publication. It has been clinically reviewed however if you notice anything that needs updating or amending please contact ppi.team@wales.nhs.uk

If you require this information in another language or format please ask a member of staff.

For further advice or information contact NHS Direct Wales 0845 46 47
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk