

## Patient information

# Advice for people 16 and over with a head injury in the community

The early intervention team have assessed your head injury and it's very unlikely to cause worrying symptoms in the coming days.

- Do not stay at home alone for the first 24 hours after injury.
- Also, stay near a telephone for the first 24 to 48 hours in case you need to access emergency medical help.
- Do not drive, cycle or operate machinery until you feel completely better. You can ask your doctor for advice about this.

### When to call 999 or attend hospital

Go to your nearest hospital emergency department as soon as possible, if you develop any of these symptoms:

- Unconsciousness or lack of full consciousness (for example, a problem keeping your eyes open)
- Drowsiness (feeling sleepy) that lasts longer than 1 hour when you would normally be wide awake
- Problems understanding or speaking
- Loss of orientation (such as knowing where you are, what time of day it is, who you're with and what's going on around you)
- Loss of balance or problems walking
- Weakness in one or more of your arms or legs
- Problems with your eyesight
- A painful headache that will not go away
- Being sick
- Seizures (also called convulsions or fits)
- Clear fluid coming out of your ears or nose
- Bleeding from one or both ears.

If you're unwell, get someone to take you to the emergency department or call 999 or 111.

## **Symptoms not usually of concern**

You may notice other symptoms over the next few days that should disappear in the next 2 weeks without the need for treatment in hospital.

These include:

- A mild headache
- Feeling sick (without being sick)
- Dizziness
- Irritability or bad temper
- Problems concentrating
- Problems with memory
- Tiredness
- Lack of appetite
- Problems sleeping.

See your doctor if:

- You're very concerned about any of these symptoms in the first few days
- Or the symptoms have not gone away after 2 weeks.

## **What can help after a head injury?**

Rest for 2 to 3 days. Then, gradually return to normal activities such as school, college or work. Be guided by your symptoms. If they get worse, go back to a level of activity that was manageable.

You can slowly return to light, non-contact exercise, gradually stepping up the amount and intensity of the exercise until you reach your normal exercise routine. This may take a few weeks.

Avoid any contact sports, such as football, rugby, boxing or martial arts, for at least 3 weeks, and until a healthcare practitioner has confirmed that you have completely recovered. If you've been told you have a skull fracture, try to minimise the risk of further head injuries by, for example, avoiding contact sports for 4 to 6 weeks.

Do not take any alcohol or illegal drugs.

Do not take sleeping pills, sedatives or tranquilisers unless a doctor has prescribed them for you.

## Long-term problems

Most people recover quickly from a head injury and do not have any long-term problems. But a few people take longer to recover or develop problems after weeks or months. These problems could include fatigue and dizziness, or problems with coordination, memory or sight. This is sometimes called post-concussion syndrome.

A few people develop problems with their hormones after a head injury. For example, the levels of sex hormones can fall. This can cause hot flushes, fatigue, loss of body hair, reduced sex drive, irregular periods, erectile dysfunction and reduced fertility. These may occur several months after the injury.

See your doctor as soon as possible if you have any of these problems and they do not get better within 2 weeks.

You can find further support and information about long-term problems after a head injury on the Headway website.

### Telephone number for further advice:

NHS 111 can help if you need urgent medical help, your GP surgery is closed, or you're not sure what to do.

**NICE** National Institute for  
Health and Care Excellence

© National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2022. 'Head injury', NICE guideline xxx. London (available at: [www.guidance.nice.org.uk/NGxxx](http://www.guidance.nice.org.uk/NGxxx)) This resource is an implementation tool and should be used alongside the published guidance. The information does not supersede or replace the guidance.

**If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities, please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo)**

**<https://www.accessable.co.uk>**



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