



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Advice after a head injury

Information for patients



Your doctor or nurse practitioner has examined you and is happy for you to go home. **However, for your safety, for the first 24 hours at home you should have a responsible adult with you, who has read this information sheet.**

Most head injuries do not lead to serious complications. However, if you experience any of the following symptoms, you should go immediately to your nearest Emergency department:

- severe or worsening headache (a mild headache is normal after a head injury)
- vomiting (being sick)
- confusion or feeling unusually sleepy
- fits/seizures (collapsing or passing out suddenly)
- any change to your eyesight
- dizziness or lack of co-ordination
- weakness in one or both of your arms or legs
- clear fluid or blood coming out of your ears or nose
- new deafness in one or both ears
- inability to remember what has happened (amnesia).

What you should not worry about

It is normal after a head injury to experience the following symptoms over the following few days:

- a mild headache. It is safe to take a painkiller, such as paracetamol. (Please see the instructions on the packet for advice about how much to take and how often.)
- feeling sick (without vomiting) or not feeling hungry. This can be helped by drinking clear fluids (such as water) and avoiding drinking alcohol.
- difficulty concentrating
- feeling more tired, which might then make you irritable or anxious.

These symptoms should disappear over the next two weeks. If they don't, or you are concerned about how you are feeling, please see your GP.

General advice

If you follow this advice you should get better more quickly and may relieve some of your symptoms.

- Try to avoid stressful situations, as these can make any symptoms worse.
- Do not return to your normal school, college or work activity until you feel you have completely recovered.
- Do not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery for at least 24 hours after your accident.
- Do not work on a computer or play computer games until you have completely recovered, as spending time concentrating on images or text on a screen may make your symptoms worse.
- Do not drink alcohol until you are completely recovered, as your ability to tolerate alcohol is reduced after a head injury.
- Do not play any contact sports for at least 3 weeks and without talking to your GP first.

More information about head injuries can be found online at:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-injury-minor/Pages/Introduction.aspx

www.patient.co.uk/health/head-injury-instructions

Taking anti-coagulant medication after a head injury

If you have a head injury and are taking medication such as warfarin or direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs) you are at higher risk of having a sudden or delayed bleeding on the brain.

Your doctor will have carried out a risk assessment, weighing up the benefits of continuing your anticoagulant (with the risk of bleeding) and stopping the anticoagulant (with the risk of blood clots forming). After one week, the risks associated with head injuries return to normal.

You have been advised to:

continue your anticoagulant

stop your anticoagulant for one week

Long-term problems

Most people recover quickly from minor head injuries and experience no long-term problems.

However, please contact your GP if you:

- are still experiencing problems two weeks after your accident
- are concerned whether you are fit to drive a car or motorbike
- develop new problems after a few weeks or months

They can make sure you are recovering properly.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

Emergency Department

John Radcliffe Hospital

Tel: **01865 220 224**

Emergency Department

Horton General Hospital

Tel: **01295 229 412**

Alternatively, you can contact your GP or NHS 111 (Freephone) for urgent advice.

If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.

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