



Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Emergency Department

Advice after your child's head injury

Information for parents and carers



Your doctor or nurse practitioner has examined your child and is happy for them to go home. When you get your child home it is very unlikely that they will have any further problems. **However, you should not leave your child alone for the first 24 hours.** You can let them sleep as they would do normally, but check on them every hour or so. If you are unable to stay with them, please make sure that another responsible adult is with your child.

Signs to look out for

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

- becoming unconscious or a lack of full consciousness (e.g. problems keeping eyes open)
- drowsiness (feeling sleepy) that goes on for longer than 1 hour, when they would normally be wide awake
- confusion (e.g. not knowing where they are, getting things muddled up)
- difficult to wake
- three or more episodes of vomiting (each vomit must be separated by 30 minutes to count as a new episode)
- problems understanding or speaking
- loss of balance or problems walking
- weakness in one or both arms or legs
- a seizure or fit (including collapsing or passing out suddenly)
- changes in your child's eyesight
- severe or worsening headache that won't go away, despite taking painkillers (a mild headache is normal)
- clear fluid or blood coming out of your child's ears or nose
- new deafness in one or both ears.

Concussion

Concussion is a temporary brain injury, which can be caused by a direct blow to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body that causes sudden jarring of the head. It can affect the normal functioning of the brain, but is not always caused by any physical damage to the brain itself.

This results in a certain signs and symptoms that start soon after the injury, but don't last long.

Please read the following signs and symptoms and follow the advised action. If the symptoms of concussion don't settle down after 1-2 weeks you should take your child to see their GP for a check-up.

The treatment of concussion follows four simple principles, called the 4R's: Recognise, Remove, Rest, Return.

1 – RECOGNISE

A child does not need to have been 'knocked out' to have concussion.

Symptoms they may tell you:

- headache
- feeling dizzy
- ringing in their ears
- feeling sick
- difficulty concentrating
- blurred vision
- feeling dazed
- feeling 'not quite right'.

Things you may notice:

- sleepiness
- poor concentration
- seeming easily distracted
- appearing more emotional
- appearing 'slowed down'.

2 – REMOVE

You should remove your child from physical activities whilst they recover. Returning to physical activity or sport too soon can:

- prolong the symptoms of concussion
- increase the risk of further concussion
- increase the risk of other injuries
- affect school performance.

A further brain injury before a concussion has fully resolved can lead to permanent brain injury or, very rarely, death.

3 – REST

The most important treatment for concussion is rest. For the first 24 hours your child should rest completely from both physical and mental (brain) activities.

Physical rest

- Your child should rest from physical activity for at least 14 days, or longer if symptoms continue.
- They can begin to return to light day to day activities as symptoms settle.

Mental rest

- Spending a long time reading, watching TV, playing computer games, etc. will initially make symptoms worse.
- After 24 hours of complete rest, these can be gradually re-introduced.

School

- It is unusual for children to need a long time off school following a minor head injury with concussion symptoms.
- It is not unreasonable for them to miss a day or two if they continue to feel unwell or their symptoms return during lessons.
- Make sure that you tell their school/teachers about the concussion.