

Mild head injury discharge advice - Adults



the brain injury association

This publication offers advice for adults on what to do after being discharged from hospital with a mild head injury. The information does not replace clinical guidance or clinical examination. If you have not been examined then contact your GP, call NHS 111 (England and Wales) or NHS 24 (Scotland).

'Red flag' symptoms

On returning home it is important that, if possible, you are accompanied by a responsible adult. While unlikely, there is a small risk of developing complications, so **if you experience any of the following symptoms in the next few days or weeks you should return to the hospital Accident and Emergency department immediately. Call 999 to use ambulance transfer if necessary.**

- Any loss of consciousness
- Loss of memory for events before or after the injury
- Confusion or irritability out of character, or unusual behaviour
- Repeated vomiting
- Drowsiness or deteriorating consciousness
- Deafness in one or both ears that was not present before
- Clear fluid coming out of the ears or nose
- Bleeding from one or both ears
- Severe and increasing headache not relieved by painkillers such as paracetamol
- Weakness
- Loss of balance or problems with walking
- Decreased sensation, or pins and needles down arms/ legs
- Blurred or double vision
- Any fits (collapsing or passing out suddenly)
- Problems with understanding information or communicating
- Reduced neck movement or severe neck pain
- Inability to be woken

Helpline: 0808 800 2244
Email: helpline@headway.org.uk
Web: www.headway.org.uk

Dos and Don'ts...

In the first 24-48 hours of the concussion, it is important to rest and sleep as needed to give the brain time to recover. 'Resting' includes reducing screen time, such as watching TV or scrolling through social media. You person should also reduce stress where possible and avoid situations where you may feel overstimulated, for example being in busy environments. Easy activities of daily living and gentle exercise such as walking can continue, and can be helpful with recovery.

Once symptoms have reduced, you can progress through the graduated return to activity (education/ work) and sport guidance produced by the UK Government and Sport + Recreation Alliance (SRA), available at www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/policy/research-publications/concussion-guidelines.

Further suggestions of what to do in the weeks that follow are...

Do...

- Do get rest and gentle exercise such as walking for the first 24-48 hours of the concussion being sustained. Avoid intense exercise.
- Do stay within reach of a telephone in case you need medical help over the next few days
- Do share this information with a relative or friend who can keep an eye on your condition
- Do follow the UK government/ SRA returning to activity (education/ work) and sport guidance

Don't...

- Don't stay at home alone for 24 hours after the injury
- Don't play or train for contact sports for at least 14 days without consulting an appropriate healthcare professional

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- Don't drink alcohol for 24 hours after injury and until symptoms improve
- Don't return to driving for 24 hours after injury and until your symptoms improve. If in doubt, consult your GP. Commercial drivers should be reviewed by an appropriate medical professional before returning to driving.
- Don't return to competition before 21 days from injury and without consulting an appropriate healthcare professional
- Don't return to work until you feel ready to
- Don't take aspirin or sleeping tablets without consulting a doctor

Most people feel back to normal within 2-4 weeks. However, you may experience some of the following symptoms over the next few days and weeks, which don't require a return to hospital.

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Visual problems
- Nausea
- Sensitivity to light/ sound
- Sleep problems
- Balance problems
- Fatigue
- Poor concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Difficulty with processing information
- Slowed reaction times
- Irritability
- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Feeling more emotional than usual

In most cases these symptoms will resolve themselves within a few days or weeks, and while some people can have ongoing effects, help and support is available.

If you are struggling with concussion and your symptoms last longer than 28 days, stay out of sport and speak to your GP. You should be honest with your sports coach, team players, employer and others in your life about how you are feeling.

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