

Minor head injury without concussion - children

Emergency Department factsheets



What is a minor head injury?

Minor head injury means that the bump or knock to the head has caused no damage to the brain. Concussion, a true brain injury, is different and if present, the doctor would have provided you with concussion information and advice. This advice sheet is a reminder to look for delayed signs of injury which were not present at the time of your child's visit.

Your child had a head injury that has been assessed as not requiring admission. Although there was no evidence of serious brain or skull injury when your child was seen, just occasionally symptoms and problems can occur later.

Your child should be observed by someone responsible (parent, teacher, or carer) for the next 24 hours, looking for any of the signs/symptoms listed in the "Return immediately" section below.

What are the symptoms?

In a minor head injury there are very few symptoms. Usually there has been crying, and perhaps a bump, a laceration (cut) on the head or face. These have been examined by the doctor and separate advice should be given about wounds, or bruising to the skin.

Instructions

Headache

- Your child may be in discomfort. Give paracetamol every 4-6 hours to relieve pain if required. Check the packet for correct dose and only use as directed. Do not give ibuprofen (as it can encourage bleeding or bruising). Aspirin should never be used in children.
- Use ice packs over swollen or painful areas. To do this wrap ice cubes, frozen peas or a

sports ice pack in a towel. Do not put ice directly on the skin.

Vomiting

- Your child may vomit one or two times in the first hour or two after the injury. If the vomiting continues, return to the emergency department.

Drowsiness

- After the business of the hospital your child may be sleepy. There is no need to keep your child awake if they want to sleep.

Return to sport

- If you have concerns about ongoing headaches, nausea, or irritability, your child should NOT return to sport. Instead go to your general practitioner or return to hospital.
- Since your child did not have a concussion your child may return to sport as usual. This is an information sheet about what to watch for if things do not go as expected.

Return immediately

If the patient develops any of the following:

- frequent vomiting
- severe or persistent headache or dizziness
- convulsion or fit or spasms of the face or limbs
- unusual or confused behaviour
- restlessness, drowsiness, (or irritability in a baby)
- your child is difficult to wake up
- weakness of the arms or legs
- abnormal or unsteady walking, poor coordination
- slurred speech
- double or blurred vision
- or if you are worried for any reason.

Problems to watch out for in the next few days to weeks

Some problems which may result from a concussion can be hard to detect at first. In the next few weeks talk to your doctor if you notice:

- irritability
- mood swings
- tiredness
- concentration problems
- behavioural changes.

These may signify concussion. Most children with minor concussion make a full recovery. Talk to your doctor.

Seeking help

In a medical emergency, go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).

For other medical problems see your local doctor or health-care professional.

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) provides health information, referral and teletriage services to the public in all parts of Queensland and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the cost of a local call*.

*Calls from mobile phones may be charged at a higher rate. Please check with your telephone service provider

Disclaimer: This health information is for general education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

The design and general content of this factsheet are reproduced with the permission of the Victorian Minister for Health, from factsheets that are Copyright © the State of Victoria. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.