

Minor head injury without concussion

Emergency Department factsheets



What is a minor head injury?

Minor head injury is when the injury is small enough so there was no damage to the brain. If there a concussion, a true brain injury, you would have received a different concussion information sheet. This sheet is a way to look for delayed signs which were not present at the time of your visit.

You had a head injury that has been assessed and does not require admission. Although there was no evidence of serious brain or skull injury when you were seen, just occasionally slow bleeding or other problems can occur later.

You should be observed for symptoms in the “Return immediately” section below for the next 24 hours.

What are the symptoms?

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

Instructions

Headache

- You may be in discomfort. Have paracetamol every 4-6 hours to relieve pain. Check the packet for correct dose and only use as directed.
- 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

- You 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

- You may be sleepy. There is no need to keep awake if you want to sleep.

Return to sport

- If you have concerns about ongoing headaches, nausea, or irritability, you should NOT return to sport. Instead go to your general practitioner or return to hospital.
- Since you do not have a concussion you 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
- 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 people 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

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