



Head Injury Advice

Information for Patients

Following your assessment in the emergency department, we believe that you can be safely managed at home. It is unlikely you will have any further problems but very occasionally complications can develop.

It is important that:

- Someone stays with you for 24 hours after you leave hospital
- You stay within reach of a phone and medical help

If you develop any of the symptoms below, please come back to the emergency department:

- Difficulty in waking up
- Severe headache not helped by painkillers
- Vomiting (two or more separate episodes)
- Problems with understanding or speaking
- Loss of balance or problems walking
- New changes with your eyesight
- Seizures or fits
- Weakness or numbness of your arms or legs
- New deafness in one or both ears
- Clear fluid coming out of the ears or nose
- Bleeding from one or both ears

Symptoms you shouldn't worry about

People sometimes have symptoms of **concussion** after an injury to their head. Concussion is a mild brain injury. The symptoms can develop straight away, or be delayed by hours or days.

Common symptoms of concussion include:

- Mild headache
- Dizziness
- Tiredness or poor sleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability or being easily annoyed
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Memory problems
- Sensitivity to light
- Lack of appetite

The symptoms above shouldn't worry you and usually settle in a few days without treatment. If you still have any of these after 2 weeks you should see your own doctor.

Things that will help you get better:

- **Do** have plenty of rest and avoid stressful situations
- **Do not** drive until your symptoms have resolved
- **Do not** take any alcohol or recreational drugs
- **Do not** take sleeping pills or sedatives unless given by a doctor
- Read the following advice on getting back to normal life, activities and sport

Return to normal life after concussion

After a concussion it is important that you return to normal life and sports **gradually**. You only need to follow the advice below if you have symptoms of concussion.

You should start with **complete rest for 24-48 hours**. After this, and once your symptoms have settled, use the table below to help you get back to normal life, spending around 24 hours on each stage. You should only move to the next stage if you don't have symptoms.

Stage	Aim	Activity
1	Return to daily activities	Reading, television, games etc. Start with 5-15 minute sessions and gradually increase.
2	Increasing activity	Home-based school or work related activity.
3	Return to study and work	Part-time return to activity at school or workplace.
4	Return to full academic or work activity	Return to full activity.

Return to sport after concussion

Before returning to sport you should limit yourself to everyday activities **without** exercising for at least one week, as set out above. This is also stage 1 in the table below.

After this, **if you don't have symptoms and have returned to normal daily activities**, you should move on to the next stages. Each stage (2-6) should take at least 24 hours. If you develop any symptoms during these, then rest for 24 hours and return to the previous stage the next day if symptom free.

The **minimum timescale** for return to competitive sport is 12 days for adults and 23 days for under 19s. **If you are under 19 years of age**, stage 1 should be at least two weeks, and each stage after this (2-6) should be at least 48 hours.

Stage	Aim	Activity
1	Minimum rest period	Body and brain rest, return to normal life.
2	Light exercise	Walking, light jogging, stationary cycling, swimming. No resistance training.
3	Sport-specific exercise	Running drills. No head impact activities.
4	Non-contact training	Harder training drills with increased intensity, co-ordination and attention. May start resistance training. No head impacts.
5	Full contact practice	Normal training activities.
6	Return to sport	Normal game play.

Tables adapted from <https://sportscotland.org.uk/media-imported/1534421/scottish-sports-concussion-guidance.pdf>

Further information is available at:

<https://sportscotland.org.uk/clubs/scottish-sports-concussion-guidance/>

<http://www.headinjurysymptoms.org>

<https://www.headway.org.uk>