Looking after your child following a head injury
Symptoms following a head injury

Some minor symptoms are normal after a head injury. These include:

1. Feeling generally dizzy, miserable and ‘off colour’, headache.
2. Loss of appetite. Your child may feel sick or may just be off his / her food. Do not force food, but make sure she/he has plenty to drink.
3. Increased tiredness. Your child may wish to go to sleep earlier than usual or sleep during the day when she/he would not normally do so. Many people believe that children should not be allowed to go to sleep after a head injury. This is not true. The belief probably arises from confusion between sleep and unconsciousness. Someone who is unconscious cannot be ‘woken up’. If your child is sleeping normally, just pop in to check every couple of hours.
4. Lack of interest and concentration. Older children may have trouble with school work or reading. Younger children may lose interest in games and toys.
5. Headache. Older children may complain of a headache and you may give them paracetamol liquid for this. In younger children headache may show only as irritability and fretfulness.

If your child is feeling unwell, keep him/her quiet and resting as much as possible. Keep him/her away from school and discourage active games or watching television.

These symptoms improve steadily and your child will be back to normal within a few days.
Abnormal symptoms

Even after a minor head injury, complications do occasionally occur. We would therefore like to see your child immediately if she/he develops any of the following symptoms:

1. Becomes steadily more sleepy, or is difficult to rouse from sleep, or unconscious.

2. Appears confused or does not seem to understand what is said to him/her.

3. Is sick more than once. (Vomiting once soon after the injury is quite common and less serious).

4. Complains of severe headache not relieved by Paracetamol or Ibuprofen.

5. Cries in a continuous and irritable way and cannot be settled.

6. Passes out, collapses or has any sort of attack which you think is a fit.

7. Clear fluid coming out of the ears or nose

8. New bleeding from one or both ears

9. New deafness in one or both ears.

10. Any loss of balance or problems when walking.

11. Weakness of one or more arms/legs.

General advice

Do not leave your child alone/unsupervised in the first 24 hours after leaving the hospital.

Ensure you have access to a telephone

Your child should not play any contact sports for at least three weeks

Ensure your child gets plenty of rest.

Your child can return to school when they are completely recovered.

Most patients recover quickly from their accident and do not experience long term problems. However, some patients only develop problems after a few weeks or months. If you start to feel that things are not quite right with your child (eg memory problems, not feeling themselves), then please contact your GP as soon as possible for an examination.

If you have any other concerns please contact NHS 111

References

NHS choices 2018
Useful addresses

Headway
National Head Injuries Association Ltd
7 King Edwards Court
Nottingham
NE1 7EW
Tel 0115 924 0800
Local Branch of Headway: 01702 221050

National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)
Head Injury Guidelines
Midcity Place
71 High Holborn
London
WC1V 6NA
www.nice.org.uk
Patient Information Service

If this leaflet does not answer all of your questions, or if you have any other concerns please contact your GP surgery or call NHS 111 for further advice.

NHS 111 service is the NHS non-emergency number. It’s fast, easy and free. Call 111 to speak to a highly trained adviser, supported by healthcare professionals. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

www.southend.nhs.uk

For a translated, large print or audio tape version of this document please contact:

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