



Mild head injury advice

Important points about mild head injury

You've had a mild head injury. Most people recover rapidly following a mild head injury. A few people may suffer symptoms over a longer period. There is a small risk of you developing serious complications so you should be watched closely by another adult for 24 hours after your injury.

Please read the following information. It outlines what signs to look out for after a head injury and what you need to do if you have problems.

Warning signs

If you show any of these signs or symptoms after your head injury, or if you get worse, seek medical attention immediately – go to your doctor, to the nearest hospital, or telephone an ambulance.

- Fainting or drowsiness, or you can't wake up
- Repeated vomiting
- Blurred vision or slurred speech
- Convulsions or seizures
- Increased confusion, restlessness or agitation
- A constant headache or a headache that gets worse
- Clumsiness, or being unable to move parts of your body
- Continual fluid or bleeding from the ear or nose
- Changes in behaviour – such as acting strange, or saying things that do not make sense

The first 24–48 hours after injury

Make sure you follow the advice your doctor gave you when you left the hospital.

See your GP if you are not starting to feel better within two weeks of your injury.



Warning signs

You should be observed. Return to hospital if you develop any of the warning signs above.



Rest/sleeping

Rest and avoid strenuous activity for at least 24 hours. It is alright to sleep tonight but you should be checked every four hours by someone to make sure you are okay.



Driving

Do not drive for at least 24 hours. You should not drive until you feel much better and can concentrate properly. Follow all hospital discharge recommendations.



Drinking/drugs

Do not drink alcohol or take sleeping pills or recreational drugs in the next 48 hours. All of these can make you feel worse. They also make it hard for other people to tell whether the injury is affecting you or not.



Pain relief

Use **Paracetamol** or **Paracetamol/Codeine** for headaches. **Do not use** Aspirin or anti-inflammatory pain relievers such as Ibuprofen or Naproxen (NSAIDs), which may increase the risk of complications.



Sports

Do not play sports for at least 24 hours. Strenuous physical activity or contact sports may worsen your symptoms.

The first four weeks after injury

You may have some common effects from the head injury called **post concussive symptoms** (see below). These usually resolve in several weeks but may take up to three months.

Tiredness can exaggerate the symptoms. During the first weeks or months, return to your normal activities gradually (not all at once). **Consider the following factors to help yourself get better:**



Rest/sleeping

Your brain needs time to recover. It is important to get adequate amounts of sleep as you will likely feel more tired than normal.



Driving

Do not drive or operate machinery until you feel much better and can concentrate properly. Talk to your doctor.



Drinking/drugs

Do not drink alcohol or use recreational drugs until you are fully recovered. They will make you feel much worse. Do not take medication unless advised by your doctor.



Work/study

You may need to take time off work or study until you can concentrate better. Most people need a day or two off work but are back full time in less than two weeks. How much time you need off work or study will depend on the type of job you do. See your doctor and let your employer or teachers know if you are having problems at work or with study. You may need to return to study or work gradually.



Sport/lifestyle

It is dangerous for the brain to be injured again if it has not recovered from the first injury. Talk to your doctor about the steps you need to take to gradually increase sports activity and return to play. **If in doubt, sit it out.**



Relationships

Sometimes your symptoms will affect your relationship with family and friends. You may suffer irritability and mood swings. See your doctor if you or your family are worried.

Post concussion symptoms

These common symptoms usually go away within a few days or weeks. Sometimes you may not be aware of them until sometime after your injury, for example when you return to work.

Physical	Headache, fuzzy or blurry vision	Nausea or vomiting (early on), dizziness	Sensitivity to noise or light, balance problems	Feeling tired, having no energy
Thinking/remembering	Poor concentration	Feeling vague or having trouble thinking clearly	Forgetfulness	Difficulty remembering new information
Mood/behaviour	Easily annoyed or frustrated	Mood swings	More emotional or sad	Nervousness or anxiety
Sleep	Sleeping more than usual	Sleeping less than usual	Trouble falling asleep	

Recovery

You should start to feel better within a few days and be 'back to normal' within about four weeks. See your GP if you are not starting to feel better. Your doctor will monitor these symptoms and may refer you to a specialist if you do not improve after four weeks.

More information

Staff at the State Head Injury Unit can guide you with returning to your normal activities.
State Head Injury Unit, Ground Floor, E Block,
Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Nedlands WA 6009
Phone: (08) 6457 4488 Fax: (08) 6457 4489
Email: shiu@health.wa.gov.au
Web: www.nmhs.health.wa.gov.au/concussion

