

Fact sheet

Mild Head Injury Advice for Children

Information for patients and carers

What is a mild head injury?

Your child has had a mild head injury, also known as concussion.

There is a small risk of serious problems after a mild head injury. **This is why your child needs an adult (parent, teacher or carer) to watch them for the next 24 hours.** Bring them back to hospital if the symptoms worsen or if they show any symptoms in the 'return immediately' section.

It is normal for your child to have a mild headache after a head injury. You can give simple pain relief like paracetamol as per packet directions. You can also apply ice packs over painful or swollen areas.



Symptoms of mild head injury

Mild head injury symptoms can last up to four weeks, but most will get better over several days. Symptoms can include:

- sensitivity to light / blurry vision
- headaches
- mood changes / irritability
- difficulty concentrating
- vomiting
- tiredness
- balance problems
- dizziness.

Return immediately

Return immediately to the hospital emergency department if the above symptoms worsen or if your child has slurred speech, weakness in the arms/legs, unusual or confused behaviour, difficulty waking up or something is not right.



Rest and recovery after you leave hospital

Your child should rest for 24-48 hours after injury. It is important your child has enough sleep and rest to allow their brain to recover.



When can my child return to an activity?



School

A minimum of 2-5 days off school is generally advised. Your child is ready to return when they have completed the activities below without symptoms:

- daily activities at home, begin with 5-15 minutes and build up
- 1-2 hours of school-like activities (e.g. homework) at home.

It is recommended to start back at school part time then increase to full time to make sure no new symptoms occur. Encourage extra rest breaks and quiet time. Tell the teacher about your child's head injury. You can give them this handout. These are the same recommendations for smaller children at daycare or kindergarten.



Screen time

Screen time or activities with increased concentration should be avoided for 24-48 hours or until symptoms resolve.

These activities can include:

- mobile phones
- computer / computer games
- loud music
- television
- video games.

Return to screen time in small amounts like 10-20 minutes. If symptoms do not occur, you can increase the time over several days. It is recommended that your child does not have screen time one hour before bed. Some good activities instead of screen time include:

- puzzles
- book reading
- familiar music
- talking on the phone instead of videocalls.



Sports and activities:

Only start sport when your child has successfully returned to school. Ensure there are no symptoms and wait at least 24 hours in between each return-to-sport step.

1. Start with light exercises including walking, swimming or stationary cycling.
2. Gradually start running and ball skills (with a soft ball only and no head contact).
3. Then begin ball passing skills increasing co-ordination and concentration i.e. warm up drills.
4. Then if medically cleared by a doctor, your child can take part in normal training for sports under supervision of a parent or coach.
5. Your child can take part in normal sports games and activities.

High risk activities should be avoided until medically cleared by a doctor to reduce the risk of further head injuries. Repeated head injuries can increase the length and severity of symptoms.

High risk activities might include:

- ball sports such as football, soccer, netball, basketball
- riding a motor or pushbike, scooter, skateboard or rollerskates
- climbing trees or other high play equipment
- hockey
- horse riding
- jumping on a trampoline.

Children should always wear a helmet when on a bike, riding a horse, scooter or on roller skates.

If you need to take time off work to care for your child while they recover, please ask your doctor for a medical certificate.

Further advice

If you have more questions about your child's recovery, you can leave a message for the Mild Head Injury Clinic Occupational Therapist on **(08) 8922 6412** and they will return your call when available. This phone line is not monitored all the time.

If the matter is urgent call Health Direct on **1800 022 222** or present to the hospital emergency department.



If you need an interpreter when reading this leaflet, please ask a staff member.