

Minor head injury

Your child has been assessed by a member of the Children's A&E team who believes that it is safe for you to take your child home.

This leaflet has been written by doctors and nurses as a guide for when you go home.

We hope that it will be helpful to you—please read it carefully.

Notes

Membership and Patient Advice & Liaison Service (M-PALS)

If you require information, support or advice about our services, you can contact the M-PALS office on the ground floor of the hospital just behind the main reception.

Alternatively, you can feedback your comments/suggestions on one of our comment cards, available at the M-PALS office, or on a feedback form on our website www.chelwest.nhs.uk.

We value your opinion and invite you to provide us with feedback of the service. In some of our wards and departments we have devices that enable patients/carers to give us their feedback before going home. Please ask a member of staff for more information.

T: 020 3315 6727

E: m-pals@chelwest.nhs.uk

Children's A&E (Paediatric Emergency Department) Chelsea and Westminster Hospital

369 Fulham Road
London
SW10 9NH

We cannot give health advice over the phone—please call your GP or NHS Direct on 0845 4647 if you have further concerns.

Main Switchboard: 020 8746 8000

Website: www.chelwest.nhs.uk

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Information for parents



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How common are head injuries?

Each year in England and Wales, around 700,000 people attend A&E departments with a head injury. Of these, 90% have only a minor head injury. The most common causes of head injuries are falls, assaults and road traffic accidents.

In the UK, 40–50% of people with head injuries are children. Children may be more likely to have a minor head injury because they are active and like to explore, but have little sense of danger.

Causes in children

Some of the more common ways that children may experience a head injury include falling while learning to walk and tripping when running.

They may also fall from cots, windows, stairs, trees, playground equipment, changing tables etc. Childhood head injuries may also occur as a result of cycling/scooter accidents or road traffic accidents.

Minor head injury

Following the injury, if the child is conscious (awake), and there is no deep cut or severe damage to the head, it is unusual for there to be any damage to the brain.

Minor head injuries should not require treatment. However, be aware you will need to return if their symptoms change or worsen in the first 48 hours.

What not to worry about

After a bump to the head it is quite common for your child to have a mild headache, feel sick (without vomiting), or be slightly dizzy.

This is likely to be worse if your child is very active and is not resting at all, and should improve with rest. Prolonged periods of watching television or playing computer games can make the headaches worse.

Some children will also be a bit grumpy, not concentrate as well as normal, get tired more easily, and not eat as well as they usually do.

However, if any of these symptoms worsen or cause you concern, please take your child back to Children's A&E.

Take your child back to Children's A&E if your child:

- is unusually sleepy or you cannot wake him/her
- has a headache that is persistent or is getting worse, despite having taken a painkiller
- is unsteady when walking, dizzy, or has a loss of balance
- has more than two separate episodes of vomiting
- has a fit (seizure)
- develops any problems with their vision (such as a squint or blurred vision, or they start to see double)
- has blood or clear fluid leaking from the nose or ear
- has confusion (not knowing where they are, getting things muddled up) or any problems understanding or speaking
- has new deafness in one or both ears
- is under one-year-old and has remained irritable or is inconsolable

A note about sleeping

After a knock to the head, children will often cry, be distressed and then settle down. It is then quite common for them to want to sleep for a short while. This is normal.

However, it will appear to be a normal 'peaceful' sleep, and they wake up fully, like after a nap. Some parents are afraid to let their children go to sleep at bedtime. Do let them.

We do not recommend waking your child at night after a minor head injury.

What can I do to help my child get better?

If your child has a minor head injury:

- give your child painkillers (such as paracetamol) if they have a mild headache
- only give your child light meals for the first couple of days
- ensure your child has plenty of rest
- avoid getting your child too excited and avoid stressful situations
- do not have too many visitors when you and your child return home
- school-age children should not return to school until they feel completely recovered
- do not let your child play contact sports (such as football or rugby) for at least three weeks
- make sure that your child avoids rough play for a few days
- keep activities requiring high concentration (such as watching television, using a computer or Xbox/Playstation games) limited to short periods

Long-term problems

Most children recover quickly from bumping their head and do not develop any long-term problems.

Some children, however, may develop problems weeks or even months after the accident.

If you think things are not quite right (such as continuing poor memory or a change in behaviour), please contact your GP as soon as possible so that your child can be checked to see if they are recovering properly.