



## Patient Information : Mild Head Injury (adults)

Cork Emergency Medicine

[www.EMed.ie](http://www.EMed.ie)



### Important points

You had a mild head injury. Most people recover rapidly following a mild head injury. However some people may suffer from symptoms over a longer period. There is a small risk of you developing serious complications **so for the first 24-48 hours on discharge home following your head injury you should be watched closely by a responsible adult. Please read the following.**

### The first 24 - 48 hours after injury

Warning Signs **You should be observed and go to your GP or return to hospital if you develop any of the above warning signs.**

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

**Driving:** Do not drive for at least 24 hours. You should not drive until you feel much better and can concentrate properly. Talk to your doctor.

**Drinking/drug:** 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 reliever** such as ibuprofen or naproxen (NSAIDS) which may increase the risk of complications.

**Sports:** Do not play sports for at least 24 hours.

### Warning signs

If you show any of these symptoms or signs after your head injury, or you get worse, go to your GP or return to the Emergency Department

- ❖ Fainting or drowsiness - or you can't wake up
- ❖ Acting strange, saying things that do not make sense (change in behaviour)
- ❖ A constant severe headache or a headache that gets worse
- ❖ Vomiting or throwing up more than twice
- ❖ Cannot remember new events, recognise people or places (increased confusion)
- ❖ Pass out or have a blackout or a seizure (jerking of the body or limbs)
- ❖ Cannot move parts of your body or clumsiness
- ❖ Blurred vision or slurred speech
- ❖ Continual fluid or bleeding from the ear or nose





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### Post Concussion Symptoms

You may have some common effects from the head injury which usually resolve in several weeks to three months. These are called **post concussive symptoms** which include:

- ❖ Mild headaches (that won't go away).
- ❖ Having more trouble than usual with concentration.
- ❖ Having more trouble than usual with remembering things (memory difficulties/ forgetfulness).
- ❖ Feeling dizzy or sick without vomiting (nausea).
- ❖ Balance problems.
- ❖ Difficulty with making decisions and solving problems, getting things done or being organised.
- ❖ Feeling vague, slowed or "foggy" thinking.
- ❖ Feeling more tired than usual and lacking energy (fatigue).
- ❖ Irritability. Losing your temper and getting annoyed easily.
- ❖ Mood swings, anxiety or depression.
- ❖ Mild behavioural change.
- ❖ More sensitive to sounds or lights.
- ❖ Change in sleep patterns. Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much.

### The first 4 weeks after injury

Tiredness can exaggerate these symptoms. Return to your normal activities gradually (not all at once) during the first weeks. **You can help yourself get better by:**

**Rest/Sleeping** Your brain needs time to recover. It is important to get adequate amounts of sleep as you may feel more tired than usual.

**Driving** It is generally wise not to drive until you feel much better and can concentrate properly for the first four weeks. If you have had a seizure, then you must not drive. Talk to your GP or Consultant.

**Drinking/Drugs** Avoid alcohol or use of recreational drugs. They will make you feel much worse. Do not take medications unless advised by your doctor.

**Work / Study** You may need to take time off work or study until you are able to concentrate better. Most people need a day or two off work but are back full time in less than 2 weeks. How much time 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.

**Sports** Avoid all body and head contact sports for until your symptoms have resolved.

**Relationships** Sometimes the symptoms you experience after a head injury will affect your relationship with family and friends. You may suffer irritability and mood swings. See your GP if you or are worried.

### Recovery

You should start to feel better within a few days and be 'back to normal' within about 4 weeks. Following discharge home, you may be given an appointment to see the Emergency Doctor. Otherwise see your GP for any concerns you may have. If symptoms persist or are severe, you may be referred to a Consultant in Brain Injury & Rehabilitation for an assessment.

If you are concerned, please contact the  
Emergency Department you first attended:

Mercy University  
Hospital  
(021) 4271971

M-UCC at  
SMHC (St.  
Mary's Health  
Campus)  
(021) 4926900

CUH  
(021) 4920200

Local Injury Unit  
Mallow General  
Hospital  
(022) 58506

Bantry General  
Hospital  
(027) 52900

