

Discharge advice for carers of children who have a head injury

Emergency Department
Tel: 01271 322480

Other formats

you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

We think that it is all right for your child to leave hospital now. We have checked their symptoms and they seem well on the road to recovery. When you get them home, it is very unlikely that they will have any further problems. However,

- **do not** leave the child alone in the home for the first 48 hours after leaving hospital
- **do** make sure that there is a nearby telephone and that the child stays within easy reach of medical help

Symptoms to watch out for

If any of the following symptoms return, we suggest you bring them back to their nearest hospital Emergency Department as soon as possible:

- unconsciousness or passing out suddenly
- any drowsiness (feeling sleepy) that goes on for longer than 1 hour when they would normally be wide awake
- any confusion (not knowing where they are, getting things muddled up)
- severe or worsening headache that won't go away despite taking painkillers (a mild headache is normal)
- 3 or more episodes of vomiting (each vomit must be separated by 30 minutes to count as a new episode)
- clear fluid coming out of their ear or nose
- any loss of balance or problems walking
- any fits

In babies (under 1 year old)

- higher pitched cry than usual
- drowsy – does not respond to your voice or unable to follow commands
- fail to grasp objects
- any behaviour not normal for your child
- confused or unaware of their surroundings

Things you shouldn't worry about

They may have some other symptoms over the next few days, which should disappear in the next 2 weeks. These include:

- a mild headache. It is safe to give your child painkillers, such as Calpol. Please read and follow the dosage instructions on the packet carefully.
- feeling sick (but not being sick) or lack of appetite. This can be helped by taking regular sips of water.
- problems concentrating
- slowness with thinking, understanding and responding to questions or commands
- feeling more tired than usual or changed sleep pattern
- more demanding than usual and being easily frustrated

Things that will help your child get better

If you follow this advice it should help them get better more quickly and it may help any symptoms they have to go away:

- offer light diet
- offer plenty of fluids to drink
- **do not** allow them to return to school until you feel they have completely recovered
- if your child has had any symptoms of concussion (loss of consciousness at the time of injury, amnesia, headache, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, poor concentration), then do not allow them to play any contact sport such as football and rugby for at least 3 weeks without talking to their doctor first. If your child has no symptoms of concussion and has simply sustained a small head wound or bruise, then it is safe to return to contact sports earlier.

For babies (under 1 year old)

- offer milk feeds as normal, and light weaning diet if your child is on solids. It may be of benefit to offer small frequent volumes initially to reduce risk of vomiting.

Long-term problems

Most patients recover quickly from their accident and experience no long-term problems. However, if you start to feel that things are not quite right for your child (for example, memory problems, not feeling themselves), then please contact your doctor as soon as possible to make sure they are recovering properly.

Further information

Headway

Headway is a national charity for patients with head injury, with helpful online support and advice.

www.headway.org.uk

How to contact us

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact your GP or the **Emergency Department** on **01271 322480**.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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