

Mild brain injury discharge advice (for adults)

You have had a mild brain injury, often called a concussion.

Most people will make a full recovery. You should start to feel better in a few days and be back to normal in a few weeks. In a very small number of cases, serious complications can develop in the first 24 hours after the injury.

Make sure you go home in the care of an adult.

Warning signs: the first 24 hours after injury

If you or your carer notices any of these symptoms, see your local doctor immediately, go to the hospital's emergency department or call triple zero (000):

- feeling faint or drowsy
- cannot be woken up
- acting strangely, saying things that do not make sense
- have a constant severe headache or a headache that gets worse
- cannot remember new events, recognise people or places
- pass out or have a blackout or a seizure
- cannot move parts of your body
- clumsiness
- have blurred vision or slurred speech
- have fluid or bleeding from the ear or nose
- have loss of hearing
- vomiting more than twice



Can I go to sleep?

Yes. It is all right for you to sleep, but you should be in the care of an adult for the first 24 hours. If it is necessary, your doctor may advise that you be woken up and checked.

Common symptoms after a mild brain injury:

If you experience any of these symptoms your doctor can monitor them for you.

Physical

Mild headaches (that won't go away)
Feeling dizzy or sick without vomiting (nausea)
More sensitive to noise or light
Balance problems

Thinking/remembering

Difficulties concentrating or paying attention
Memory difficulties or forgetfulness
Feeling vague or 'foggy thinking'
Difficulty in problem solving and making decisions

Sleep

Difficulties sleeping
Sleeping too much
Not sleeping enough
Feeling more tired and having no energy

Mood/behaviour

Losing your temper
Getting annoyed easily
Feeling anxious or stressed
More emotional or sad

Remember, most people will make a full recovery within a few days or weeks.

See your doctor if you:

- experience any of the warning signs
- are concerned about any of your symptoms
- want to return to contact sport
- are taking any other medications
- are wondering if you can return to driving or operating machinery
- are concerned about returning to work or study
- have family or friends worried about you.



The first 4 weeks after injury



Rest/sleeping

For the first 24 hours make sure you are in the care of a responsible adult. If it is necessary your doctor may advise that you be woken up and checked.

It is important to get adequate amounts of sleep and mental rest to allow your brain to recover.



Pain relief

Use paracetamol or paracetamol/codeine for headaches.

Do not use aspirin or an anti-inflammatory pain reliever such as ibuprofen or naproxen (NSAIDs).



Driving

Do not drive or operate machinery for at least 24 hours.

You should not drive or operate machinery until you feel much better and can concentrate properly.

Talk to your doctor if you are uncertain.



Drinking/drugs

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

If you are taking medication prescribed by your doctor, do not stop taking them unless advised to do so by a doctor.



Sports

Do not play sports or do strenuous physical activities for 48 hours and until you are free from any symptoms.

It is dangerous for the brain to be injured again if it has not recovered from the first injury. Talk to your doctor about a graduated return to sports and physical activities. **If in doubt, 'sit it out'.**



Work/study

You may need to take time off work or study if you are having trouble concentrating or remembering things. Everybody is different.

Discuss this with your doctor and your employer/supervisor.



Relationships

Sometimes your symptoms can affect your relationship with family and friends, such as having a short temper or anxiety. Talk to your doctor if you, your family or friends have any concerns.

Disclaimer: This health information is for general education purposes only. Always consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

Discharge recommendations

Adapted from "Mild Head Injury Discharge Advice" by Dr Duncan Reed (2007), Director of Trauma, Gosford Hospital. NSW Institute of Trauma and Injury Management.

