

Mission Bay Doctors Ltd– Head Injuries

HEAD INJURIES IN CHILDREN

When a child suffers a head injury, usually things are fine and there are no long-term complications. However, sometimes the child's brain has suffered more of a shake than was obvious to start with.

Symptoms of damage or bleeding may not develop for some hours, or even days, after a knock to the head. In rare cases, symptoms from a slow bleed can develop even weeks after a head injury.

This is why 'head injury instructions' are given to people who have had a head injury. These are symptoms to look out for following a knock to the head.

WARNING SIGNS

YOU SHOULD SEEK MEDICAL HELP (EITHER GO TO THE HOSPITAL OR CALL 111 FOR AN AMBULANCE) IF YOUR CHILD HAS ANY OF THE FOLLOWING WARNING SIGNS IN THE FIRST 24 HOURS AFTER THE INJURY:

- Is hard to wake (at night) or will not stay awake (during the daytime)
- Will not drink or feed (if a baby or infant)
- Suddenly goes out cold (unconscious) or passes out
- Repeatedly vomits (throws up)
- Seems to be confused or behaves strangely, any problems understanding or speaking (slurring)
- Is very grumpy or irritable
- Has fits or seizures (repeated jerking movements of the arms, legs or face, even if they have epilepsy)
- Doesn't seem to recognise you
- Has become cross-eyed or their eyes are doing funny things
- Becomes weaker or more unsteady
- Cries more than usual and will not settle down
- Doesn't seem well to you
- Worsening headache - which does not go away with paracetamol (but see below)
- New deafness in one or both ears
- Unusual breathing patterns

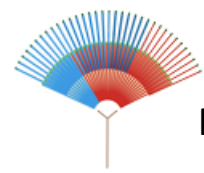
DROWSINESS

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 after a nap.

Some parents are afraid to let their children go to sleep if the accident happens just before bedtime. Do let them. Drowsiness means they cannot be roused. If you have a concern, wake the child up after an hour or so. They may be grumpy about being woken up, but that is reassuring. You can then let him or her go back off to sleep again. You can do this a few times during the night if there is particular concern. When asleep, check to see that he or she appears to be breathing normally and is sleeping in a normal position.

A NOTE ABOUT HEADACHE

It is normal after a knock to the head to have a mild headache. Sometimes there is also tenderness over bruising or mild swelling of the scalp. Some paracetamol or ibuprofen will help. It is a headache that becomes worse and worse which is of more concern.



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COMMON SYMPTOMS IN CHILDREN THAT DON'T NEED TO WORRY YOU

For a few days after a head injury it is normal for a child to:

- Feel a little unsteady or giddy
- Not feel like playing with one thing for long or doing schoolwork or homework
- Be a little bit grumpy
- Seem to need more sleep than usual
- Complain of a bit of a headache
- Dislike loud noises.

ALL THESE THINGS SHOULD NORMALLY GET A BIT BETTER AS EACH DAY PASSES.

THE MAJORITY OF CONCUSSIONS WILL GET BETTER ON THEIR OWN OVER 7 – 10 DAYS. TO RECOVER, THE BRAIN AND BODY NEED TO **REST**. PHYSICAL EXERCISE AND ACTIVITIES THAT REQUIRE CONCENTRATION (VIDEOGAMES, TEXT MESSAGING, SCHOOLWORK ETC) MAY MAKE SYMPTOMS WORSE AND DELAY RECOVERY. CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH CONCUSSION NEED MORE TIME TO RECOVER THAN ADULTS.

CARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S HEAD INJURY

PAIN RELIEF

Pain relief like paracetamol (eg. Panadol or Pamol) is perfectly safe for their headache.

PLAY

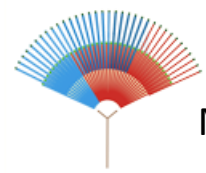
Your child may not want to focus on one thing (like a game or schoolwork) for the first few days after the injury. This is normal. Your child must avoid rough play for at least two days following the injury.

FOR AT LEAST THREE WEEKS FOLLOWING THE INJURY YOUR CHILD SHOULD AVOID ROUGH SPORTS AND ANY ACTIVITIES THAT COULD LEAD THEM TO HIT THEIR HEAD.

SCHOOL OR CHILD CARE

Your child should have one or two days off crèche, day-care, preschool or school, following their head injury. When your child returns to school, tell the teachers/caregivers about the injury.

YOUR CHILD SHOULD START TO FEEL BETTER IN THREE TO FOUR DAYS AFTER THE INJURY. COME AND SEE US IF YOUR CHILD IS STILL HAVING PROBLEMS AFTER A WEEK, OR IF YOU HAVE ANY CONCERNS.



RETURNING TO SPORT

IN GENERAL FOR SEVERE CONCUSSION OR REPEAT HEAD INJURIES WE ADVISE NOT TO PLAY ROUGH SPORTS OR OTHER ACTIVITIES THAT COULD LEAD THEM TO HIT THEIR HEAD FOR A PERIOD OF 3 WEEKS.

Your child's return to activities and sport programme following a concussion/mild traumatic brain injury



Move to the next stage if no symptoms appear

