



# Head injury advice (inpatient advice from the Falls Team)

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## Information for patients who have had a head injury whilst in hospital

This factsheet contains information that you and your family or carers may find useful after your head injury. Please keep it in a safe place, in case you need to refer to it later.

### **If you develop any of the following symptoms, please seek urgent medical advice:**

- unconsciousness, deterioration in conscious level, or increased drowsiness (for example, problems keeping eyes open or being hard to wake)
- new or increased confusion (not knowing where you are, getting things muddled-up)
- new or worsening problems with swallowing, speaking, eyesight or eyelid closure, hearing or facial movement
- loss of balance or new problems standing or walking with new weakness in one or both arms or legs
- very painful headaches that will not go away
- repeated vomiting (being sick)
- fits (collapsing or passing out suddenly)
- clear fluid coming out of your ears or nose, which has developed since leaving hospital
- bleeding from one or both ears, or new deafness.

### **Things you should not worry about**

#### **Symptoms which are to be expected after a head injury include:**

- mild headaches
- problems concentrating or with your memory
- feeling sick (but without vomiting)

- tiredness
- ongoing blurred or double vision
- lack of appetite
- dizziness
- problems with sleeping
- irritability or bad temper.

These symptoms are common and should improve over time, depending on the severity of your injury. If you feel concerned about any of these symptoms you should discuss them with your GP.

### General advice after a head injury

#### Do

- Do get plenty of rest and avoid stressful situations.
- Do ask for medical advice if you have redness, inflammation, or discharge from your head wound.
- Do keep within easy reach of a telephone in case you need medical help.
- Do make an appointment with your GP to discuss your injury.

#### Do not

- Do not stay at home alone for the first 48 hours after leaving hospital. Keep within easy reach of a telephone, in case you need medical help.
- Do not drink any alcohol until you are free of symptoms from your head injury. Both alcohol and recreational drugs are linked with an increased risk of further injury.
- Do not take any sleeping pills, sedatives, or tranquilisers unless given by a doctor who knows of your condition.
- Do not return to your normal college or work activity until you feel you have completely recovered (you may need a sick certificate). Consider a gradual or phased return if this is helpful.

### When can I return to my normal activities?

#### Driving

If you have not been given specific advice regarding your return to driving, we would recommend you contact the DVLA before you drive a car, motorbike, or ride a bicycle on the road. Only consider these activities once you feel you have completely recovered from your injury.

#### Physical activity, including contact sport

Depending on your injuries, you will need to check with the relevant medical teams as to when it would be safe to return to heavy physical activity or contact sports. This advice will vary depending on the extent of your injuries.

## **Air travel**

Some people may find that flying makes their symptoms worse. If you plan to fly within three months of your injury, check with your GP first. This is especially important if you have suffered seizures, bleeding within your brain, or a skull fracture.

## **What if I have any long-term problems or concerns?**

Most patients recover quickly from their injury and have no long-term problems. However, some people may go on to have delayed complications. If you find you are having difficulties, such as problems with your thinking, memory and concentration, or changes in your mood, then please discuss this with your GP.

## **Will I need a follow-up appointment?**

Some patients will also need to be seen in an outpatient clinic several weeks after their head injury. You may receive an appointment for this. This will depend on the severity of your head injury. You will be advised if you need a follow-up before you leave hospital.

## **Further information**

Further information on head injuries is available from Headway (<https://www.headway.org.uk/>), a national charity.

- Telephone: 0808 800 2244

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**This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.**

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**Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments** please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145, or email [ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital.** Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

**Further patient leaflets** are available via the East Kent Hospitals website (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/information-for-patients/patient-information/>).

Reference number: Web 682

First published:  
August 2023

Last reviewed:  
August 2023

Next review date:  
December 2026

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