

## Patient Information

# Head injury in children

<https://kingstonhospital.nhs.uk/information/head-injury-in-children>

This is for anyone looking after a baby or child who has a head injury.

Head injuries are common in children. Most are minor and it is unlikely that your child will experience further problems.

This leaflet explains when you should seek urgent medical attention for your child's head injury and how to take care of them following a head injury.

### When should I call 999 if my child has a head injury?

Call 999 if your child has hit their head and you notice they have one or more of the following:

- inability to wake up after being knocked out
- difficulty staying awake or keeping their eyes open
- a fit (seizure)
- problems with their vision
- clear fluid coming from their ears or nose
- bleeding from their ears or bruising behind their ears
- numbness or weakness in any part of their body
- problems with walking, balancing, understanding or speaking
- they have been hit in a serious accident, such as a car crash, or a bicycle crash while not wearing a helmet
- they have fallen from at least 3 metres high.

### When should I take my child to the nearest Emergency Department (A&E)?

If your baby is less than 1 year old, you should take them to the Emergency Department (A&E) if you are worried about their health.

If your child is more than 1 year old, you should take them to the ED if you notice one or more of the following:

- they have been knocked out but have now woken up
- they have been vomiting since the injury
- they have a headache that does not go away with painkillers
- they have problems remembering things
- they have problems with balance or walking normally
- they have clear fluid or bleeding from nose or ears



- they have a cut or injury which continues to bleed despite applying pressure for 5 minutes
- they have a change in behaviour such as being more irritable, easily distracted, lacking concentration, or having no interest in things around them. This is particularly important in babies and children under 5 years of age
- they have a large swelling to the head, especially if your child is less than 1 year old.

## What will happen at the Emergency Department (A&E)?

We will assess your child for signs of significant head injury, such as skull fracture or brain injury.

We may give your child pain relief, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen (if you have not already given them some).

We may clean any cuts or lacerations, and some will require Steri-strips (paper stitches) or glue. Very occasionally we may apply synthetic stitches. We will show how to care for your child's wound before you leave the hospital.

We may give your child a CT scan of their head, or keep them in hospital for a period of observation. We may send them home after giving you advice on how to care for them. Healthcare professionals will explain and discuss this with you at the Emergency Department (A&E).

## What symptoms can I expect my child to have following a head injury?

Even if you do not need to seek urgent medical advice it is normal for your child to have some symptoms after a head injury. These can last up to 2 weeks. They may include the following:

- mild headache
- feeling sick (but not vomiting)
- dizziness
- irritability or bad temper
- concentration or memory problems
- tiredness or problems sleeping.

**You should take your child to a GP if their symptoms do not go away after 2 weeks or if you feel concerned about their general health.**

## What can I do to help my child recover at home?

- ➔ Do not leave them alone in the home for the first 48 hours after a head injury.
- ➔ Do not allow them to return to school until you feel they have completely recovered.
- ➔ Make sure there is a telephone nearby and you and your child stay within easy reach of medical help.
- ➔ Encourage them to have plenty of rest and avoid stressful situations.

- Give them paracetamol if they seem to be in pain. Always read the packaging carefully and do not exceed the recommended dose.
- For 48 hours following the injury, keep them away from situations where they might have another head injury (for example riding a bicycle or climbing).
- Avoid any contact sport such as football or rugby for 2 to 3 weeks.

## Will my child have long term problems after this injury?

Most children recover quickly from their accident and experience no long term problems. A small number of children develop problems which may not be obvious until weeks or months after the injury.

Contact your GP as soon as possible if you start to feel that things are not quite right with your child (for example memory problems or not feeling themselves).

## More information


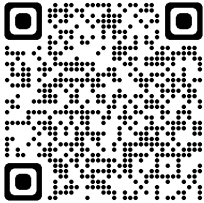

 NHS logo NHS information on head injury <a href="http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-injury-and-concussion/">www.nhs.uk/conditions/head-injury-and-concussion/</a>	
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## Contacts

Your nearest Emergency Department (A&E)

<b>Translate</b>	Please speak to a member of staff before or during your visit to the hospital if you require translation.
<b>Accessibility</b>	Please contact the Patient Experience Team on 020 8934 3850 if you need this information in a different format. For information accessibility please visit Kingston Hospital AccessAble <a href="http://www.accessable.co.uk/kingston-hospital-nhs-foundation-trust">www.accessable.co.uk/kingston-hospital-nhs-foundation-trust</a>
<b>Support services</b> Visit the hospital website, ask a member of staff, or ring us for details. <a href="http://www.kingstonhospital.nhs.uk">www.kingstonhospital.nhs.uk</a> Switchboard 020 8546 7711	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Find Us' page for maps, transport, registering a blue badge, disabled access</li> <li>• Information, advice and support for patients and relatives (PALS) 020 8934 3993</li> <li>• Pastoral and Spiritual Support 020 8546 7711</li> <li>• Learning Disability Liaison Team 020 8934 6895</li> </ul>