

Emergency Services

Head Injury (Adult)

A head injury results from a direct blow to the head that causes shaking and jarring of the brain. If the blow is hard enough to injure the brain, it is called a concussion.



The doctor who examined you did not find any signs of serious complications from your head injury. We expect to have a quick recovery.

You must not be left alone for the next 24 hours as it is possible for more serious symptoms to arise. You must be watched closely by another responsible adult.

What are the common symptoms of a head injury? How long will they last?

The most frequent symptoms are:

- headaches, tiredness, dizziness
- trouble sleeping
- difficulty concentrating and learning new things
- feeling anxious, depressed or irritable

You may experience none, a few, or all of these symptoms. They may show up right away or over the next few days. These symptoms are part of the normal recovery process.

Recovery from a head injury varies from person to person. Most people start to feel better within hours or days; however, some symptoms can last for a week or longer.

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if:

- You have a headache that gets worse or does not go away with pain medicine.
- You are feeling dizzy and it does not go away with rest.
- You have nausea, or you vomit two or more times.
- You have changes in your vision.

Call 9-1-1 right away if:

- You have uncontrolled shaking, tremors, or convulsions.
- You are very sleepy.
- You become confused, restless or agitated.
- You can not be woken up.
- You have weakness in the arms or legs.
- You have slurred speech.
- You stumble when you walk.
- You have clear fluid coming from the ear(s).

Head Injury (Adult) - *continued*

How to take care of yourself at home

Rest

- Stay home for the next day or so.
- Gradually return to your regular activities.
- **Do not** do any strenuous physical activities for the next 24 hours.
- **Do not** watch the TV or work on a computer for long periods of time.

Driving

- **Do not** drive for the next 24 hours.
- Over the next week, if you are having trouble concentrating, do not drive or operate machinery until this symptom goes away.

Health

- **Do not** drink alcohol for at least the next 24 hours. If you continue to have a headache, do not drink alcohol until your doctor says it is safe to.
- Only take medicine prescribed by your doctor.
- **Do not** take aspirin (ASA), ibuprofen, or other anti-inflammatory medicines. These medicines can increase the chance of bleeding.

Activities and Exercise

- You can do activities or exercise as long as you do not have any symptoms of your head injury.
- Start with light exercise such as walking and cycling on a stationary bike.
- Gradually increase how often and how long you do an activity or exercise.
- If the injury was caused during sports, check with your doctor before returning to that sport.
- Until you are fully recovered, do not take part in any contact sports or any sport where there is a chance you might hit your head (such as hockey, soccer, football, skiing, snow boarding, or cycling). Your doctor will let you know when you are fully recovered.
- Always wear a helmet when playing any sport where there is a chance you could hit your head.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca