



## Head Injury

You have received a head injury. It does not appear serious at this time. Headaches and vomiting are common following head injury. It should be easy to awaken from sleeping. Sometimes it is necessary for you to stay in the emergency department for a while for observation. Sometimes admission to the hospital may be needed. After injuries such as yours, most problems occur within the first 24 hours, but side effects may occur up to 7-10 days after the injury. It is important for you to carefully monitor your condition and contact your health care provider or seek immediate medical care if there is a change in your condition.

### **WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF HEAD INJURIES?**

Head injuries can be as minor as a bump. Some head injuries can be more severe. More severe head injuries include:

- A jarring injury to the brain (concussion).
- A bruise of the brain (contusion). This means there is bleeding in the brain that can cause swelling.
- A cracked skull (skull fracture)/
- Bleeding in the brain that collects, clots, and forms a bump (hematoma).



### **WHAT CAUSES A HEAD INJURY?**

A serious head injury is most likely to happen to someone who is in a car wreck and is not wearing a seatbelt. Other causes of major head injuries include bicycle or motorcycle accidents, sports injuries, and falls.

### **HOW ARE HEAD INJURIES DIAGNOSED?**

A complete history of the event leading to the injury and your current symptoms will be helpful in diagnosing head injuries. Many times, pictures of the brain, such as CT or MRI are needed to see the extent of the injury. Often, an overnight hospital stay is necessary for observation.

### **WHEN SHOULD I SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE?**

You should get help right away if:

- You have confusion or drowsiness.
- You feel sick to your stomach (nauseous) or have continued, forceful vomiting.
- You have dizziness or unsteadiness that is getting worse.



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- You have severe, continued headaches not relieved by medicine. Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, fever, or discomfort as directed by your health care provider.
- You do not have normal functions of the arms or legs or are unable to walk.
- You notice changes in the black spots in the center of the colored part of your eye (pupils)
- You have a clear or bloody fluid coming from your nose or ears.
- You have a loss of vision.

During the next 24 hours after the injury, you must stay with someone who can watch you for the warning signs. **This person should contact local emergency services (911) if you have seizures, you become unconscious, or you are unable to wake up.**

### **HOW CAN I PREVENT A HEAD INJURY IN THE FUTURE?**

The more important factor for preventing major head injuries is avoiding motor vehicle accidents. To minimize the potential for damage to your head, it is crucial to wear seat belts while riding in motor vehicles. Wearing helmets while bike riding and playing collision sports (like football) is also helpful. Also, avoiding dangerous activities around the house will further help reduce your risk of head injury.

### **WHEN CAN I RETURN TO NORMAL ACTIVITIES AND ATHLETICS?**

You should be reevaluated by your health care provider before returning to these activities. If you have any of the following symptoms, you should not return to activities or contact sports until 1 week after the symptoms have stopped:

- Persistent headache.
- Dizziness or vertigo.
- Poor attention and concentration.
- Confusion.
- Memory problems.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Fatigue or tire easily.
- Irritability.
- Intolerant of bright lights or loud noises.
- Anxiety or depression.
- Disturbed sleep.

### **MAKE SURE YOU:**

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.