

### What is a minor head injury?

The most common type of minor head injury is concussion. Concussion may be associated with loss of consciousness ('a blackout'). This is often brief and is normally followed by a rapid and complete recovery.

### What causes a minor head injury?

The skull and facial bones are hard and they protect the brain, which is soft. If these bones are injured then the brain becomes more vulnerable.

When someone has a knock to the head, their brain moves about and can hit the skull and facial bones, which may cause bruising and cause a person to 'black out'. Sometimes there can be a skull fracture (although this is rare with a mild head injury).

### What are the symptoms?

A person with a minor head injury may have bruising, swelling and bleeding anywhere around or inside the brain. These symptoms will vary, depending on how the injury happened. Some people will 'black out' for a short period. Some people are confused about where they are and what has happened. It is common to have a headache, nausea, vomiting and mild dizziness or slight sleepiness.

### Treatment

While in the emergency department, the injured person will be closely monitored and may have:

Mild painkillers for headache or pain

The person may be fasted – nothing to eat or drink until further advised

Anti-nausea tablets for any nausea or vomiting

- A CT scan of the brain, neck or bones (if needed)
- An x-ray of the neck if there is neck pain or a suspicion of neck injury

If the injury is mild, they will be sent home with family or friends. Please ask for a certificate for work if needed.

### Instructions

The staff who have examined you, did not find any serious brain or skull injuries, but it is possible for more serious symptoms to develop later on.

- Do not let the injured person drive home.

- Do not leave them alone for the next 24 hours.
- Do not let them drink alcohol for at least 24 hours.
- Rest quietly for the day.
- Use 'ice packs' over swollen or painful areas. To do this wrap ice cubes, frozen peas or a sports ice pack in a towel. Do not put ice directly on the skin.
- Take simple painkillers (such as paracetamol) for any headache. Check the packet for the right dose and use only as directed.
- If an injured person is discharged from hospital in the evening, make sure they are woken several times during the night. Set the alarm. Ensure the injured person walks to the toilet or does an activity that allows you to assess their coordination – can they walk and talk.
- Do not let them eat or drink for the first six hours (unless advised otherwise by the doctor). Then offer them food and drink in moderation.
- Do not let them take sedatives or other medication unless instructed.

### Return immediately

If the patient develops any of the following

- Unconsciousness or undue drowsiness
- Frequent vomiting
- Severe headache or dizziness that continues
- Convulsion or fit or spasms of the face or limbs
- Unusual or confused behaviour
- Difficult to wake up
- Weakness of the arms or legs
- Abnormal or unsteady walking
- Slurred speech
- Blurred or double vision
- Bleeding or discharge from ear or nose
- If you have any other concerns

Do not return to work or school until fully recovered. The length of time depends on the type of work or study and the severity of the head injury. Ask your local doctor or health care provider for advice.

Do not return to sport until all symptoms have gone. This is because your reaction times and thinking will often be slower, putting you at risk of further injury. It is important to avoid another head injury before fully recovering from the first, as a second injury can cause additional damage.

## What to expect

Many people cannot remember events before or after their head injury (amnesia).

It can take some time for the brain to recover. During this time headaches and mild cognitive problems (such as difficulty concentrating, remembering things, performing complex tasks, and mood changes) are common. It is also normal to feel more tired than usual.

Most people make a full recovery and the symptoms last only a few days. There is no specific treatment other than plenty of rest.

Some people will have ongoing problems. If this is the case, see your local doctor or health care provider.

Disclaimer: This health information is for general education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

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## Notes:

## Follow up with:

Date and Time-

Name-

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## Seeking help

In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).

For other medical problems see your local Doctor or health-care professional.

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) provides health information, referral and triage services to the public in all parts of Queensland and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the cost of a local call\*.

\*Calls from mobile phones may be charged at a higher rate. Please check with your telephone service provider



## Want to know more?

- Ask your local doctor or health care professional
- Visit Healthinsite  
[www.healthinsite.gov.au](http://www.healthinsite.gov.au)
- Visit the Better Health Channel  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)