Head injury care after discharge

Your child has been assessed in the emergency department after having a head injury and is safe to go home. Most children with a mild head injury recover quickly but it’s important to closely monitor your child during the next couple of days to look for signs of a more serious head injury.

Care at home
For the first **48 hours** after a head injury you should encourage your child to:

- rest (but keep a normal sleep/wake routine)
- eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of fluids
- avoid activities that make symptoms worse

**When should I see a doctor?**
See a doctor **as soon as possible** if your child has any of these symptoms:

- severe headache, especially if it is getting worse
- dizziness or unsteady walking
- nausea, vomiting or poor feeding
- unexpected drowsiness or weakness
- disorientation or confusion
- irritability, continued crying or unusual agitation
- slurred speech or blurred/double vision
- seizure (fit)

**In an emergency, always call 000 immediately.** Otherwise, visit your nearest hospital emergency department.

Returning to sport
Your child can start exercising after a few days of rest. Gradually return to sport starting with light training and building up over several days before returning to a full game. They should not return to competitive sports until all symptoms have settled.

**Concussion**
Concussion is the medical name for short-term changes in brain function that some children experience after a mild head injury.

If your child has concussion they may have some of these symptoms during recovery:

- mild headaches which settle with rest and simple pain medication
- mild dizziness
- feeling tired
- difficulty paying attention
- difficulty remembering things
- feeling emotional or moody

These symptoms will usually settle over time. See a doctor if you’re concerned.

**Things to remember**
- Your child should rest for the first 48 hours after a head injury.
- Keep a close watch on your child for the first couple of days after a head injury.
- See a doctor as soon as possible if your child’s symptoms get worse or you notice new symptoms.
- Your child should return to normal activities gradually. Do not return to competitive sport until all symptoms have settled.

FS028 developed by Emergency Department, Queensland Children’s Hospital. Updated: August 2019. All information contained in this sheet has been supplied by qualified professionals as a guideline for care only. Seek medical advice, as appropriate, for concerns regarding your child’s health.