



MILD HEAD INJURY

Most people recover rapidly following a mild head injury. A few people may suffer from symptoms over a longer period.

There is a small risk of you developing serious complications so **you should be watched closely by another adult for 24 hours after the contest**. Please read the following. It outlines what signs to look out for after a head injury and what you need to do if you have problems.

WARNING SIGNS

If you show any of these symptoms or signs after your head injury, or you get worse, go to the nearest hospital, doctor or telephone an ambulance immediately.

- Fainting or drowsiness
- Acting strange, saying things that do not make sense (change in behaviour)
- A constant severe headache or a headache that gets worse
- Vomiting or throwing up more than twice
- Cannot remember new events, recognise people or places (increased confusion)
- Pass out or have a blackout or a seizure (any jerking of the body or limbs)
- Cannot move parts of your body or clumsiness
- Blurred vision or slurred speech
- Continual fluid or bleeding from the ear or nose

THE FIRST 24 – 48 HOURS AFTER INJURY

Rest / Sleeping

Rest and avoid strenuous activity for at least 24 hours. It is alright for you to sleep tonight but you should be checked every four hours by someone to make sure you are alright.

Driving

Do not drive for at least 24 hours. You should not drive until you feel much better and can concentrate properly. Talk to your doctor.

Drinking / Drugs

Do not drink alcohol or take sleeping pills or recreational drugs in the next 48 hours. All of these can make you feel worse. They also make it hard for other people to tell whether the injury is affecting you or not.

Pain Relief

Use **paracetamol** or **paracetamol/codeine** for headaches. **Do not use aspirin or anti inflammatory pain reliever** such as ibuprofen or naproxen (NSAIDs), which may increase the risk of complications.

Sports

Do not play sports for at least 24 hours. Follow the medical suspension as outlined by the doctor.

See your local doctor if you are not starting to feel better within a few days of your injury.

THE FIRST 4 WEEKS AFTER INJURY

You may have some common effects from the head injury which usually resolve in several weeks to three months. These are called **post concussive symptoms** (see below). Tiredness can exaggerate the symptoms. Return to your normal activities gradually (not all at once) during the first weeks or months. **You can help yourself get better by:**

Rest / Sleeping - Your brain needs time to recover. It is important to get adequate amounts of sleep as you may feel more tired than normal.

Driving - Do not drive or operate machinery until you feel much better and can concentrate properly.

Drinking / Drugs - Do not drink alcohol or use recreational drugs until you are fully recovered. They will make you feel much worse. Do not take medication unless advised by your doctor.

Work / Study - You may need to take time off work or study until you can concentrate better. Most people need a day or two off work but are back full time in less than 2 weeks. How much time you need off work or study will depend on the type of job you do. See your doctor and let your employer or teachers know if you are having problems at work or with study. You may need to return to study or work gradually.

Sport / Lifestyle - It is dangerous for the brain to be injured again if it has not recovered from the first injury. Talk to your doctor about the steps you need to take to gradually increase sports activity and return to play. **If in doubt “sit it out”.**

Relationships - Sometimes your symptoms will affect your relationship with family and friends. You may suffer irritability and mood swings. See your doctor if you or your family are worried.

RECOVERY

You should start to feel better within a few days and be ‘back to normal’ within about 4 weeks. See your local doctor if you are not starting to feel better. Your doctor will monitor these symptoms and may refer you to a specialist if you do not improve over 4 weeks up to 3 months.

POST CONCUSSION SYMPTOMS

There are common symptoms after a mild head injury. **They usually go away within a few days or weeks.** Sometimes you may not be aware of them until sometime after your injury like when you return to work.

• Mild headaches (that won't go away)	• Mood swings
• Having more trouble than usual with attention & concentration	• Irritability. Losing your temper and getting annoyed easily
• Having more trouble than usual with remembering things (memory difficulties /forgetfulness)	• More difficulty than usual with making decisions and solving problems, getting things done or being organised
• Feeling dizzy or sick without vomiting (nausea)	• Anxiety or depression
• Change in sleep patterns. Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much	• Feeling more tired than usual and lacking energy (fatigue)
• Feeling vague, slowed or “foggy” thinking	• More sensitive to sounds or lights
• Balance problems	• Reduced tolerance to alcohol
• Mild behavioural change	

Adapted from “Mild Head Injury Discharge Advice” author Dr Duncan Reed (2007) Director of Trauma Gosford Hospital. NSW Institute of Trauma and Injury Management