

Patient information leaflet following a

mild head injury

(Adult)



Raigmore Hospital, Inverness

You have been admitted to hospital for a period of observation as you have sustained a mild head injury. This leaflet explains what this means, what to expect and how to look after yourself following discharge.

The effects of a head injury can vary widely.

Depending on the extent of the injury you may notice some of the difficulties further described within, usually these symptoms will improve over time.

If you continue to notice difficulties 6 months post-head injury, please speak further to your GP who will be able to refer you to further resources and services if required.

Mild Head Injury

A mild head injury (sometimes called concussion) happens when you bump, knock or jolt your head. The effects of a head injury can vary widely and you may experience a combination of the following:

1. Physical symptoms such as persistent headaches; dizziness; feeling sick; sensitivity to light and noise; blurred vision; tiredness; poor sleep.
2. Psychological symptoms such as low mood; anxiety; irritability; increased emotions
3. Cognitive symptoms such as poor concentration; forgetfulness; difficulties working out problems

Most people usually recover within a few days to a few weeks however for some people the symptoms can continue for several weeks or months and this is called post-concussion syndrome. Usually the symptoms of PCS gradually improve over time. It's important to give yourself time for rest and recovery, reduce overstimulating and noisy environments, avoid alcohol, and prioritise sleep and a gradual increase in activities as symptoms begin to reduce. Further information on some of the difficulties you may experience and strategies to manage them, are provided in this booklet.

Excessive Tiredness (Fatigue)

This is common after a head injury and can affect your motivation and energy levels. It also can affect your mood, behaviour, memory, and cause frustration. "Fatigue Management" is important to both rest your body and mind. The key points to follow are to: -

1. **Pace**- break tasks into more manageable chunks, allow time to rest, try adjusting the task to reduce energy levels, or switch tasks. Use equipment to assist and allow more time to complete tasks.
2. **Plan** - create a routine, spread activities out during the week if possible, and make use of a planner or a diary. Think about the level of demands of each activity and try to allow more time or ask for assistance. Don't do everything all at once and plan for breaks. Avoid the "boom or bust" or "roller-coaster" when energy levels go up and down and try to maintain a steady course.
3. **Prioritise** – Decide what the essential tasks are and don't be afraid to delegate or stop doing tasks. Some daily tasks are unavoidable but try to ask for help, share responsibilities, allow time for yourself to relax.

Cognition

Issues with memory, concentration, attention, planning and organisational skills, processing information, and problem solving are not uncommon after a head injury.

These can take time to resolve. Making slight changes to your environment can help you remember things.

- Write information down: you can use a notepad/ calendar on your phone
- Make use of a pin board on the wall to attach important letters and documents and make them easy to find
- Use reminders and alarms: either on your phone or through smart speakers
- Where possible stick to your usual routine. Doing the same things at the same time each day can be helpful

It may be helpful to consider carrying out some simple brain training exercises like crosswords, word searches, Sudoku and jigsaws, but not to excess that can cause further fatigue.

Should your problems persist, you should seek advice from your GP who may refer you for further assessment and/or rehabilitation.

Mood

It's normal to experience changes in your mood following an injury. Some people may notice they feel lower than usual, experience increased anxiety, or feel easily irritated or angry.

It might be that people close to you notice these changes more than you do.

These difficulties usually resolve with time, ongoing concerns can be discussed with your GP.

It can also be helpful to make use of grounding and breathing strategies when you are feeling overwhelmed

- **Grounding technique (5-4-3-2-1):** Look around, what are 5 things you can see? 4 things you can hear? What 3 things you can touch or feel? What 2 things can you smell? Take 1 deep breath, and focus on the feeling of stress and anxiety leaving your body.
- **Diaphragmatic breathing:** Take a deep breath in and imagine you are inflating a balloon, expanding your stomach as you breathe in, and as you breathe out imagine that balloon deflating (repeat x 4).

Work

Occasionally people may experience difficulty in returning to work due to physical, cognitive and/or fatigue factors.

This may take time to resolve, and you may need to seek advice from your employer and Human Resources department and discuss a phased return.

You may be referred to an Occupational Therapist for a workplace assessment to help guide a safe return to work for yourself and your employer, this can be arranged via your GP or community Single Point of Access (contact list on page 7).

Leisure

These activities are equally important and part of our quality of life however they can become difficult to manage due to all the issues mentioned. Learn to adapt and plan and don't give up on what you enjoy. Allow time for leisure to keep both a healthy body and mind but accept that some activities may need be done differently than before.

Avoid contact sports for at least 3 weeks.

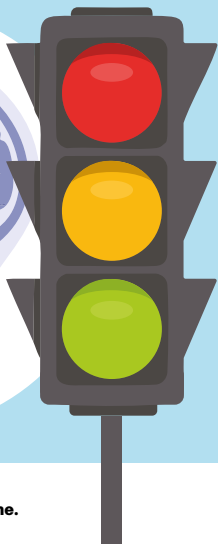
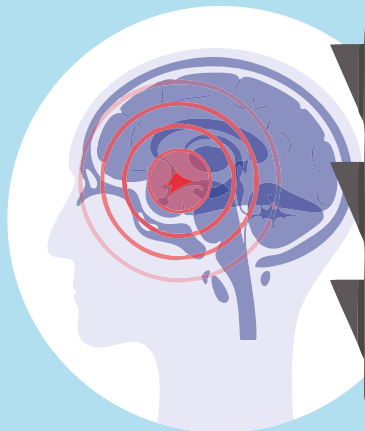
Resources including Highlife highland, and Headway are found in the contact list at the end of the booklet.

If you feel you are still experiencing difficulties and issues and these do not improve in the 6 months following your injury, please contact your local GP and/or local Single Point of Access

Single Point Of Access – Community Teams Referral

Locality	Phone	Email
Inverness	01463 888333	nhsh.spoainvernesseastwest@nhs.scot
Badenoch and Strathspey	01479 812618	nhsh.bandsspoa@nhs.scot
Mid Ross	01349 860460	nhsh.mrhsc@nhs.scot
East Ross	01349 853131	nhshighland.eric@nhs.scot
Nairn	01667 422702	nhsh.ccna@nhs.scot
Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross	01471 820174	nhsh.singlepointofcontactslwr@nhs.scot
Sutherland	01408 664018	nhsh.sspoc@nhs.scot
Caithness	0345 850 9413	nhsh.caithnessspoa@nhs.scot
Lochaber	01397 709832	nhsh.lochaberdistrict@nhs.scot

When to drive after a head injury



If you have had a serious brain injury you MUST NOT drive and YOU must inform the DVLA.

Examples of serious brain injury may include

- Loss of consciousness following injury
- Confused or disorientated for 24hrs following injury
- Seizure activity following injury
- Bleeding or bruising to the brain
- Requiring surgery
- Issues with vision after injury

Even if you have had a minor head injury you should not drive until you have recovered from any symptoms.

Examples include

- Poor concentration
- Dizziness
- Blurred vision

If you are unsure about your fitness to drive consult your doctor

Information on how to inform DVLA -
www.gov.uk/report-driving-medical-condition
Phone: 0300 790 6806

Failure to inform DVLA can result in suspension of licence and/or £1000 fine.

Medical illustration NC25-00003



Additional resources

- [Citizens Advice](#)
- [Employability Scotland](#)
- [Job Centre plus](#)
- [Highlife Highlands](#)
- [Men's Shed](#)
- [nhsinform](#): Information and strategies for improving mental wellbeing
- [breathing space](#): A confidential phone line for anyone in Scotland struggling with their mental health



the brain injury association

National free helpline 0808 800 2244

Headway provides lots of additional information and support for people and their families affected by head injury. The Headway Highland group is based in Inverness and provides support for individuals and their families across the Highlands.