

Symptoms of a minor head injury

A minor head injury often causes a bump or bruise on the exterior of the head. Other symptoms may include:

- nausea (feeling sick)
- mild headache
- tender bruising or mild swelling of the scalp
- mild dizziness

If you or your child experience these mild symptoms after a knock, bump or blow to the head, you do not require any specific treatment.

Close observation

If your child has sustained a head injury, observe them closely for 48 hours to monitor whether their symptoms change or worsen. If you have sustained a head injury, ask a friend or family member to stay with you for the following 48 hours to keep an eye on you.

If your child has a minor head injury, they may cry or be distressed. This is normal and, with attention and reassurance, most children will settle down. However, seek medical assistance if your child continues to be distressed.

Serious symptoms

If, following a knock to the head, you notice any of the symptoms below in either you or your child, seek immediate medical assistance:

- unconsciousness (either very briefly or for a longer period of time)
- difficulty staying awake or still being sleepy several hours after the injury
- having a seizure or fit (when your body suddenly moves uncontrollably)
- difficulty speaking, such as slurred speech
- vision problems or double vision
- difficulty understanding what people say
- reading or writing problems
- balance problems or difficulty walking
- loss of power in part of the body, such as weakness in an arm or leg
- pins and needles (a prickling or burning feeling) in the hands or feet
- amnesia (memory loss), such as not being able to remember what happened before or after the injury
- clear fluid leaking from the nose or ears (this could be cerebrospinal fluid, which normally surrounds the brain)
- a black eye (with no other damage around the eye)
- bleeding from one or both ears
- new deafness (loss of hearing) in one or both ears
- bruising behind one or both ears
- a lasting headache since the injury
- vomiting since the injury
- irritability or unusual behaviour
- visible trauma (damage) to the head, such as an open, bleeding wound

If any of these symptoms are present, particularly a loss of consciousness (even for a short period of time), immediately go to the accident and emergency (A&E) department of your local hospital or call 999 and ask for an ambulance.