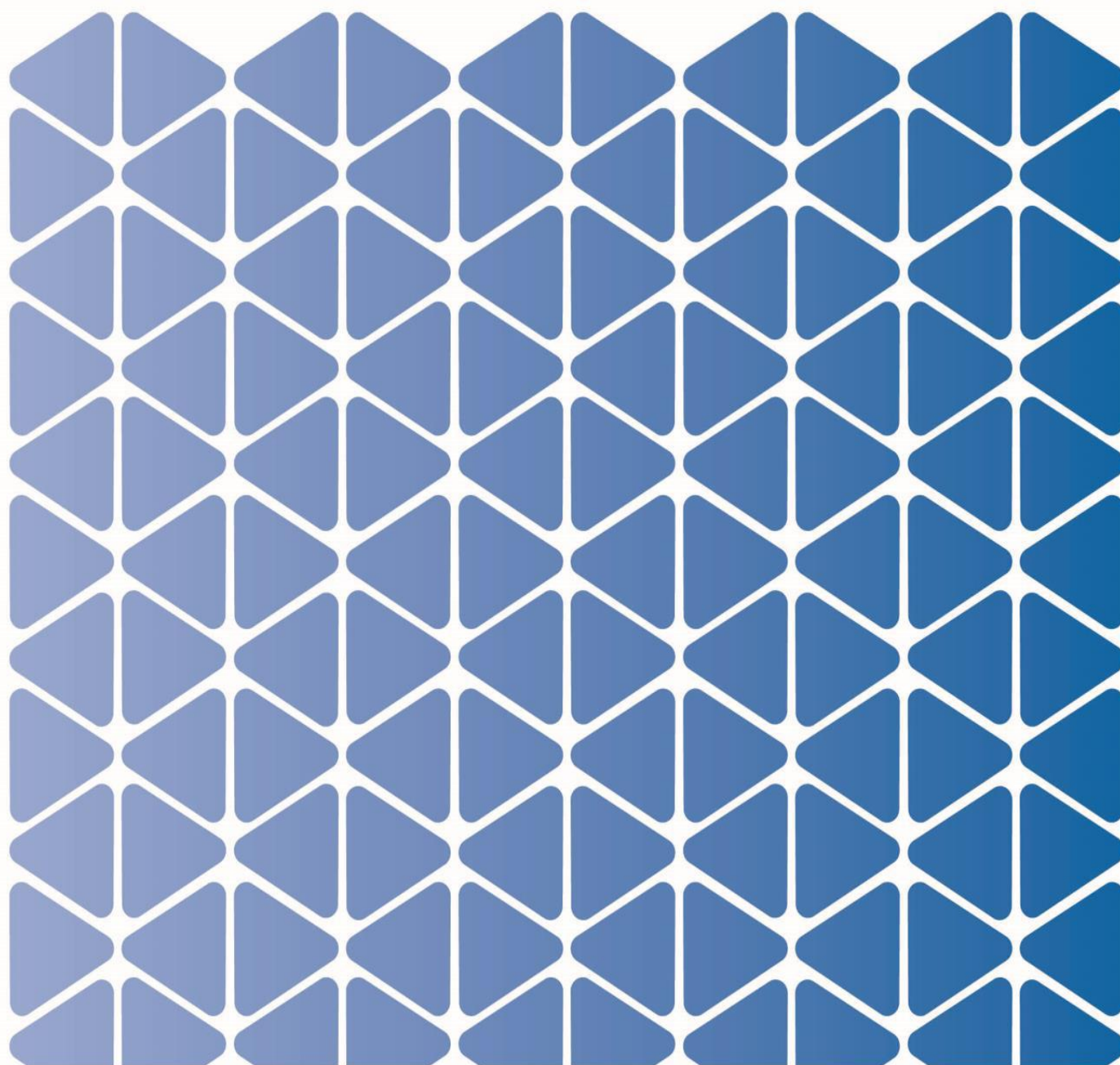


PATIENT INFORMATION**HEAD INJURY INFORMATION
(ADULT)**

Occupational Therapy

HEAD INJURY INFORMATION

This information is designed as a guide to help those who have experienced a head injury, their relatives and friends.

What is a head injury?

A head injury is an injury that results in damage to the brain. This can occur when the brain is struck by a sharp object or when the head is stopped rapidly such as in a car accident.

When the head is hit, the brain may be shaken around inside the skull. This can sometimes cause the brain to get bruised and swollen.

The brain is made up of thousands of long, thin nerve fibres. Some of these nerves can snap or break if a blow on the head is severe enough. Like any other part of the body, the brain has blood vessels in it. If a head injury is very serious, some of these blood vessels can tear and bleed. This happens soon after the injury. The bleeding often stops on its own and the blood vessels heal like any cut will.

What symptoms can I expect?

The most common symptoms after a head injury are known as the post-concussion syndrome, 20-50% of people with a mild head injury have been shown to have post-concussion symptoms persisting beyond three months after the accident. Yet some people are symptom free after a few days or weeks. However, when symptoms persist longer than that there is no way of knowing when they will pass. These symptoms are part of the normal recovery process and are not signs of brain damage or medical complications.

After a head injury it is common for some people to experience difficulties in some or all of the following areas. These are called post concussional symptoms:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Memory
- Smell and taste changes
- Concentration
- Balance
- Increased sensitivity to light and noise
- Communication
- Anxiety and mood
- Sleep problems
- Irritability
- Seizures (uncommon)
- Hearing and vision

It can be helpful to be aware these symptoms may arise and that they are part of a normal recovery. Some symptoms may take longer to recover than others and recovery can vary between individuals.

Some patients find that at first post-concussion syndrome makes it hard to work, manage daily activities or relax. The best way to deal with this is to resume activities and responsibilities gradually, a little at a time. The time you spend at work, getting together socially, with your family, or exercising is determined by what you are comfortable with. You should pace yourself and be sure to get all the rest you need. If your symptoms get worse, or if you notice new post-concussion symptoms, this is a sign that you are pushing yourself too hard.

Ignoring your symptoms and trying to 'tough it out' often makes the symptoms worse. Symptoms are your body's way of giving you information. A broken bone or a torn muscle hurts so that you won't use it and it has time to heal. Post-concussion syndrome is your brain's way of telling you that you need to rest it. Most doctors who treat head injuries agree that recovery is faster when the patient gets enough rest and resumes responsibilities gradually.

RETURNING TO NORMAL ACTIVITIES

Driving

If you have a head injury, then the injury may affect ability to drive (a car/motorbike/pedal cycle or operate machinery). Problems you may experience such as dizziness, headaches and sensitivity to light will impair your concentration whilst driving even if you feel able to. It is important to speak to your GP or the DVLA to find out when you can resume driving.

Return to work

Most people who have received a minor head injury are able to resume normal activities after a few days spent quietly at home. Always seek medical/professional advice before attempting work and inform your employer of your injury. It may be that some adjustments need to be made to your work environment to make it easier for your return. Similarly, if you are at school or college it is important to check with your doctor/GP about plans to return and ways of managing this.

Occupying your time

It is important whilst you are at home that you use your time purposefully so as not to get bored or frustrated. You may feel more tired than usual and need more sleep in the early stages, so it is important you plan for this. Build your activities up slowly so you have structure to your day.

Alcohol and head injury

People often find that they are more sensitive to the effects of alcohol for a time after a head injury. It is best to abstain from any alcohol for the first week or so, then be careful to notice how it affects you after that.

Sporting Activities

Once you are free from symptoms, resume a low level of physical activity and if you remain symptom free build up your activity levels gradually. You are advised to refrain from any strenuous contact sporting activities for a minimum of 3 weeks, and then follow the above advice to return to sport. If you are unsure about whether to continue with activities, please contact your GP for guidance.

DAILY ROUTINE

Try to continue with your daily routine such as getting up and getting washed and dressed as you would do normally. It is important to try to keep to your normal bedtime routine and sleep pattern.

HELP WITH THINKING SKILLS

A head injury often causes forgetfulness and it is more difficult to take on board new information. The brain has to work harder and can get overloaded more easily. It will help to get into a routine of writing things down, making lists, using a diary and calendar.

Strategies to help manage your symptoms

To help with concentration

- Take regular breaks
- Reduce distractions
- Pace activities throughout the day
- Concentrate on one thing at a time

To help with your memory

- Use a diary/calendar
- Use a mobile phone for alarms/reminders
- Keep a list of things to do and tick things off as you do them

IF SYMPTOMS WORSEN

Occasionally symptoms may worsen and if this happens you should contact your GP/Emergency Department for advice.

For further information or advice, please call the Occupational Therapy team on 01905 760 683 / 01905 760 170. We are available to speak to you Monday - Friday 8:30 - 16:30.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Headway

www.headway.org.uk

Helpline telephone number: 08088002244

Email: helpline@headway.org.uk

NICE Patient Guide:

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg176

Feedback for Inpatient Therapies

Please scan the QR code or follow the link below:

If you have been seen by a Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist during your admission, please leave us some feedback by scanning the QR code or following the link and filling in the short survey.



<https://apps.worcsacute.nhs.uk/PublicSurvey/AHPFeedback>

Ward admitted to: _____

Therapy team who treated you: _____

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.