

Post-concussion syndrome

You have been diagnosed with concussion. We feel it is safe for you to go home but here is some information you should know for your recovery.

What is post-concussion syndrome (PCS)?

PCS is a collection of symptoms that may occur following a minor head injury. These symptoms can start close to the injury or may develop weeks or months later.

Everyone who has a minor head injury experiences different symptoms and recovers at different rates. If you are not aware of them the signs of PCS can be distressing but symptoms often happen even when there is no damage to the brain.

The majority of sufferers are symptom free within a few days or weeks. A small number have problems lasting for several months or more, but these still get better eventually.

What are the symptoms of PCS?

Cognitive symptoms – affecting how a person thinks, learns and remembers:

- Loss of memory
- Easily distracted
- Unable to focus on or finish a task
- Lack of insight or reckless behaviour (e.g. returning to work too soon or driving when it is not safe to do so)

Physical symptoms

- Difficulty sleeping
- Fatigue (common)
- Mild headaches
- Dizziness/balance problems
- Light sensitivity
- Reduced tolerance to alcohol
- Sensitivity to loud noises
- Ringing noise in ears (tinnitus)
- Changes to taste/smell
- Nausea

Emotional and behavioural symptoms

- Irritability/anger
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Increased/decreased libido

What should I avoid?

If you have any of the above symptoms you should not operate heavy machinery.

Repeated head injuries can further increase a risk of serious damage, so it is important that you avoid any chance of further head injuries.

This means steering clear of dangerous situations or contact sports. It is advisable to avoid alcohol in the days following the injury.

Do not drive until your concentration and reactions are good enough. Sometimes, it may be necessary to inform the local DVLA of your injury. For guidance speak to your GP.

Support available

Fear, worry and stress can worsen symptoms and their impact on everyday life. It is important to get as much rest as possible and use practical aids (such as setting reminders, reducing distractions, to-do lists, sleep hygiene) to allow you to function.

You may benefit from a gradual return to work and should speak to your employer about this. If symptoms persist for **more than two weeks** after the injury, or if they are **severe and not getting any better**, contact your GP.

Further information / references:

More information on PCS and practical methods to help cope with the listed symptoms can be found at:

- www.headway.org.uk (read the information on ‘*Minor Head Injury and Concussion*’)
- www.nhs.uk
- www.patient.co.uk

Tell us your views

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your treatment and care, please speak to a senior member of staff or to the nurse looking after you. The matrons are also available during normal working hours and they welcome your views.

You can also pick up a copy of the Trust leaflet called ‘Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)’ which explains how you can raise concerns or give feedback on your experience at the hospital

Friends and Family Test

Whatever your experience you can give feedback by answering the Friends & Family test question – ‘Overall, how was your experience of our service?’ – by going online www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/get-in-touch/friends-and-family-survey.htm.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Dr E Duffield, Emergency Department, June 2022.

Next review due: June 2024