

Head injury: assessment and early management

Information for the public

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Head injury: the care you should expect

Each year, over 1 million people attend emergency departments in England and Wales with a recent head injury. Most people recover on their own, but about 200,000 are admitted to hospital, about 40,000 have evidence of traumatic (severe) brain injury and about 2,000 will die because of their injury. Others have long-term disability. We want this guideline to make a difference to people with a head injury by making sure:

- people are transported from the scene of their injury to the best centre for treatment as quickly as possible
- people get timely CT head scans and imaging of their necks when needed
- tranexamic acid (a medicine that controls bleeding) is given within 2 hours of the head injury if needed
- suspected injury to the pituitary gland or other lasting problems are assessed and referred appropriately
- people with a head injury, and their family members and carers, are given clear information about what to do when they are discharged from hospital.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your health professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any treatment or care?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to the treatment or care that worry you more than others?
- How will the treatment affect your day-to-day life?
- What happens if you don't want to have treatment?

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about head injury.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Brain and Spine Foundation](#), 0808 808 1000
- [Child Brain Injury Trust](#), 0303 303 2248
- [Headway – the brain injury association](#), 0808 800 2244

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by a head injury, and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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