

Mild Brain Injury & Post-Concussion Syndrome

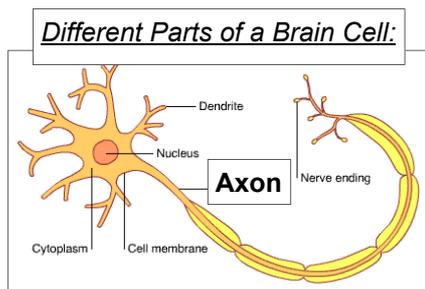
Patient Information Booklet



Talis Consulting Limited

What is “Minor Head Injury”?

Minor Head Injury is one of the most common neurological conditions seen in Accident & Emergency Departments across the UK. If the head injury represents a single injury and the patient’s presentation and symptoms are uncomplicated, the research is clear that all symptoms should resolve completely and leave no residual difficulties. This usually takes three to six months, regardless of age at injury.



Mild Traumatic Brain Injury or Minor Head Injury has a variety of clinical indicators which professionals use for classification purposes:

- ◆ **Glasgow Coma Scale** score of 13 or above (This measures how conscious you are. 15 is the maximum that you can score on this)
- ◆ **Post Traumatic Amnesia** (PTA) of no more than 24 hours. (PTA refers to the period after a head injury during which you cannot lay down new and continuous memories)
- ◆ **Neurological signs** and symptoms such as double vision or headache

What is Post Concussion Syndrome?

Neuropsychologists do not always agree on what symptoms are typical of Post Concussion Syndrome (PCS) because many of the features that have been labelled as being PCS can actually occur without a head injury ever having taken place!

It is believed that PCS has three main groups of symptoms and that these are:

- ◆ Cognitive (for example, difficulty concentrating)
- ◆ Emotional (for example, depression, irritability)
- ◆ Somatic or physical (for example, headaches, fatigue, dizziness)



It is argued that Mild Traumatic Brain Injury sets the scene for PCS to occur, but there are a number of factors that make it more likely that PCS will develop.

These are usually non-brain injury factors!

- ◆ Pre-injury history of anxiety or depression
- ◆ Post injury pain or stress
- ◆ Beliefs about the injury
- ◆ Expectations about what symptoms may develop
- ◆ Misinterpretation of bodily symptoms
- ◆ Coping by avoiding
- ◆ Inadvertent reinforcement of symptoms by health professionals leading to insecurity about making a recovery

What can I hope for?

Post-concussion syndrome usually resolves itself within one month, with the vast majority of cases resolved by three months. The rate of recovery depends on psychological attitude, motivation to get better and coping style.

Research indicates that getting psychological treatment early on in the process is the most helpful to a full recovery. Cognitive-Behavioural treatment gives information about the nature of symptoms, including advice about how symptoms do resolve, helps with coping strategies and outlook.

How Can I Help Myself?

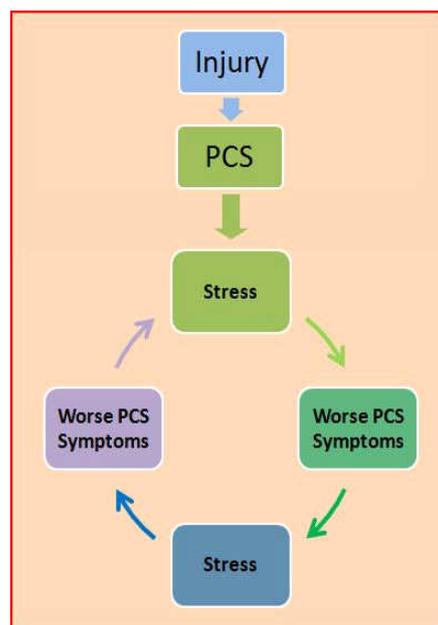
Try to relieve stress during recovery

Stress is unhelpful to PCS symptoms. It may cause a vicious cycle of stress increasing severity of symptoms which increases stress. It is important you recognise if this cycle occurs and take steps to relax, or take a break from what you are doing.

The symptoms of PCS can be compared to a “temperature gauge” which allows you to recognise when to increase demands upon yourself and when to take a break.

Try to return to your old activities, or even take up new ones

It may be beneficial to try to return to your old lifestyle and activities. This should be done in comfortable, graded stages. It is important to return to activities at your own pace and to recognise that you are in control of this process.



Useful Websites:

www.headway.org.uk

– A useful web site with much information about brain injury and rehabilitation in the UK.

www.birt.co.uk

– Another useful web site concerning brain injury, with downloadable leaflets about brain injury and its implications.

www.patient.co.uk/health/Post-concussion-Syndrome.htm

- Useful information regarding concussion symptoms

