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Head Injury

CASES

Although head injury cases are a common occurrence in primary and emergency care, there has been little agreement on the definition, diagnosis and treatment of these injuries. The use of validated assessment tools and evidence-based management can prompt effective investigations, promote optimal recovery, reduce serious complications and prevent repeat head injury.

This module aims to:

- present a practical categorisation of head injury in adults and children over the age of two
- provide guidance for referral to A&E
- offer recommendations for safe return to sport/work
- outline management strategies for post-injury symptoms

Note: This module will focus on adults and children over age two.

Case 1: Beth, age 17

Beth is brought to the surgery as a walk-in one hour after an incident in her hockey game — she was tackled and hit her head on the the astro turf. She did not lose consciousness and now has a Glasgow Coma Score (GCS) of 15 with a normal cervical spine, neurological and external head/neck examination.

How would you further evaluate this patient?

If she had symptoms of concussion, what advice would you give about when she could return to playing hockey?

How would you proceed if there had been a previous head injury eight weeks earlier?

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Case 2: Adam, age 3

Two hours after a fall, Adam is brought in by his mother for evaluation. He fell down the back steps and hit his head. He lost consciousness for about one minute (witnessed by mum) and has vomited twice. He has a