

Head injury symptom tracker – child aged 0-5 years

This checker is aimed at children between 0-5 years old who have sustained some form of head injury.

The term mild head injury will be used if your child has had an accident where their head has been moved or hit with force. The term concussion is used if there is a sudden but short-lived loss of mental function following an accident – it is the most common but least serious type of brain injury.

There will be examples here that may not apply to your child as they have not reached that stage in their development. Please check the symptoms below that your child may be experiencing, based on changes since the head injury eg they may be more irritable, they used to talk in sentences and are now much quieter, or they used to sleep all night and now wake up several times.

If your child is under five years of age and you have new concerns about his/her development, please also contact your health visitor.

Please check the symptoms below that your child may be experiencing, based on changes since the head injury.

If you have noticed changes that are not listed that concern you, please do not hesitate to contact us. This should be a change from what your baby or child was doing before their head injury ie a loss of a skill that they had before their injury.

Physical

- **Sleeping pattern:** Difficulty getting off to sleep, staying asleep, sleeping more/less.
- **Movement:** Difficulty sitting up, rolling, pulling self up, holding and playing with objects.
- **Mobility:** Losing balance, bumping into things, not crawling as much.
- **Appetite:** Always hungry and never full, not eating as much, don't eat or drink like they did before.
- **Energy levels:** More tired than usual, having more rests at home, finding it hard to get through their days without rests or naps.
- **Sensory disturbance:** Not coping in busy environments, change to hearing, vision, smell, taste or touch.



Thinking skills, communication and interaction

- **Early interaction:** Not responding to your voice, looking at you, making noises, babbling.
- **Attention/concentration:** Finding it hard to focus at home/school, flitting from one thing to another, not able to sit and watch TV programmes or stay focused on school/play.
- **Talking:** No longer joining two or more words together, taking an interest in words, talking more or less than before (over 2-3 years).
- **Understanding language:** Not responding to name, following instructions, answering questions, looking at person talking.
- **Reading/writing at a different level:** Changes noticed in school (only applicable to 4-5 years).



Participation in daily life

- **Play:** Less interested in play, not as responsive to objects and toys, noises, actions, not manipulating objects and toys in same way, not showing interest in play alongside peers (aged 3-4), less imaginative, less focused.
- **Leisure and social activities:** Difficulty accessing the same leisure activities as previously. Difficulty coping with social activities, such as parties.
- **Motivation/drive to do things:** Not bothered about doing anything, you have to suggest things and often get a refusal to participate.



Behaviour, emotion and wellbeing

- **Irritability:** Seem more irritable, not settling, not as calm as usual.
- **Tearfulness:** Easily upset compared with normal, crying more, sometimes tearful without knowing why.
- **Anxiety:** Showing signs of being worried or anxious, being clingy, not wanting to be left, getting distressed in situations where they would be happy normally.
- **Emotional needs:** More or less emotional, out of character for them.

