This information sheet was written following the recommendations of NICE—The National Institute for Clinical Excellence, September 2007 (www.nice.org.uk)

Further information is available from Headway Southampton (National Charity for Head Injury—Tel: 023 8070 2326)

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Things that will help you get better:

If you follow this advice you should get better more quickly and it may help any symptoms you have to go away:

- DO NOT stay at home alone for the first 48 hours after leaving hospital
- DO make sure you stay within easy reach of a telephone and medical help
- DO have plenty of rest and avoid stressful situations
- DO NOT take any alcohol or drugs
- DO NOT take sleeping pills, sedatives or tranquilisers unless they are given by a doctor
- DO NOT play any contact sport (for example, rugby or football) for at least 3 weeks without talking to your doctor first
- DO NOT return to your normal school, college or work activity until you feel you have completely recovered (sick certificate may be required)
- DO NOT drive a car, motorbike or bicycle or operate machinery unless you feel you have completely recovered
- DO NOT watch TV/play video games or use a computer for long periods

We think that it is alright for you to leave hospital now. We have checked your symptoms and you seem well on the road to recovery. When you get home it is very unlikely that you will have any further problems. But, if any of the following symptoms do return, we suggest you come back, or get someone to bring you back to your nearest hospital A&E Department as soon as possible:

- Unconsciousness, or lack of full consciousness (for example, problems keeping eyes open)
- Any confusion (not knowing where you are, getting things muddled up)
- Any drowsiness (feeling sleepy) that goes on for longer than 1 hour when you would normally be wide awake
- Any problems understanding or speaking
- Any loss of balance or problems walking
- Any weakness in one or more arms or legs
- Any problems with your eyesight
- Very painful headache that won’t go away
- Any vomiting—getting sick
- Any fits (collapsing or passing out suddenly)
- Clear fluid coming out of your ear or nose which has developed since discharge
- Bleeding from one or both ears
- New deafness in one or both ears

Things you shouldn’t worry about

You may feel some other symptoms over the next few days which should disappear in the next 2 weeks. These include a mild headache, feeling sick (without vomiting), dizziness, irritability or bad temper, problems concentrating or problems with your memory, tiredness, lack of appetite or problems sleeping. If you feel very concerned about any of these symptoms in the first few days after discharge, you should go and see your own doctor to talk about them. You can take painkillers for your headache if you need to.

If these problems do not go away after 2 weeks, you should go and see your doctor. We would also recommend that you seek a doctor’s opinion about your ability to drive a car or motorbike.

Long-term problems

Most patients recover quickly from their accident and experience no long-term problems. However, some patients only develop problems after a few weeks or months. If you start to feel that things are not quite right (for example, memory problems, not feeling yourself), then please contact your doctor as soon as possible so that we can check to make sure you are recovering properly.

Follow Up

Some patients will require to be seen in the Outpatients Clinic several weeks after their head injury. You may receive an appointment for this.

Any problems or queries:

If you have a problem or query, contact your GP, the Hospital Emergency Department (Tel: 023 8079 6220), the Ward you were on, or NHS Direct (08454647)