

HEAD INJURY

Care of Patient Not Requiring Hospitalization



GENERAL INFORMATION

Any head injury may be dangerous, whether or not the injured person becomes unconscious.

The presence or absence of swelling at the site of injury has no bearing on its seriousness. The real extent of injury can be determined only after careful examination and observation of the patient over a period of time. The first 24 hours following injury are the most critical. Serious after-effects may appear, however, considerably later.

X-ray examination of the skull may be advisable following head injury.



IMPORTANT POINTS IN TREATMENT

Most important in the treatment of head injury is for a *responsible person to stay with the patient* and watch carefully for the appearance of possibly serious symptoms.

After examination by a doctor, the injured patient will be sent home with you. You are responsible for watching the patient and reporting to the doctor if any of the following symptoms appear:

1. Inability to awake or arouse the patient
2. Vomiting
3. Convulsions
4. Marked restlessness
5. Inability to move arms and legs equally well on both sides
6. Temperature above 100° F., with or without a stiff neck
7. Severe headache that does not go away 4 hours after injury
8. Mental confusion

Activity. Waken the injured patient *every* hour for the first 24 hours. This includes every hour throughout the night.

Diet. The patient should eat lightly for a day or two and should not have any sedatives or alcoholic drinks.

General Measures

1. Place an ice pack directly over the injured area and keep it there for 1 or 2 hours, or as long as it can be tolerated. Remove it occasionally during this time.

2. The patient should report to the doctor for a second examination the day after injury if any of his symptoms persist.

3. Call the doctor if you notice any unusual symptoms during the first 24 hours of observation.

Medications. Do *not* let the patient take any medications unless they are prescribed by the doctor.