

Clinical Advice for Acute Head Injury

Red Flags – Patients presenting with any of the following symptoms should be referred directly to the Emergency Department

- Any loss of consciousness as a result of the injury, from which the person has now recovered.
- Amnesia for events before or after the injury.
- Persistent headache since the injury.
- Any vomiting episodes since the injury.
- Any previous brain surgery.
- Any history of bleeding or clotting disorders.
- Current anticoagulant therapy such as warfarin.
- Current drug or alcohol intoxication.
- There are any safeguarding concerns (for example, possible non-accidental injury or a vulnerable person is affected).

Amber Flags – Patients presenting with any of the following symptoms should be considered for referral to the Emergency Department.

- Irritability or altered behaviour which is out of character for the individual
- Visible trauma to the head not covered in Red Flags but still of concern to the professional.
- No one is able to observe the injured person at home.
- Continuing concern by the injured person or their family or carer about the diagnosis.

Green Flags – For Patients presenting with none of the previous symptoms carers should be advised of the following verbally and directed to the Digital Health Centre leaflet for Head Injuries.

- A specification that a responsible adult should stay with the patient for the first 24 hours after their injury.
- Details about the recovery process, including the fact that some patients may appear to make a quick recovery but later experience difficulties or complications.
- Contact details of community and hospital services in case of delayed complications.
- Information about return to everyday activities
- Inform patients and their families and carers about the possibility of persistent or delayed symptoms following head injury and whom to contact if they experience ongoing problems.