Head injury: assessment and early management.

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National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Head injury: assessment and early management. London (UK): National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE); 2023 May 18. 74 p. (NICE guideline; no. 232)

View Original Guideline

Overview

Guideline Objective

To provide recommendations on assessment and early management of head injury in babies, children, young people, and adults

Note: For the purposes of this guideline, a head injury is defined as any trauma to the head other than superficial injuries to the face.

Patient Population

Babies, children, young people, and adults with a head injury

Note: Babies are defined as being under 1 year, and children and young people as being 1 year to under 16 years.

Recommendations

Recommendation Statements

Major interventions covered in this guideline include:

- Pre-hospital assessment and referral to hospital
- Immediate management at the scene and transport to hospital
- Assessment in the emergency department
- Investigating clinically important traumatic brain injuries and injuries to the cervical spine
- Providing information and support for families and carers
- Referral to a neuroscience unit, discharge, and follow-up

Note: Full recommendation statements have not been provided because this guideline does not meet EGT's systematic review of the evidence criteria. Refer to the original guideline for more information.

Evidence Rating Scheme

Refer to the original guideline documentation for more information.

Recommendation Rating Scheme

Refer to the original guideline documentation for more information.

Related Content

Supporting Documents

- Evidence Reviews; 2023 May 18.
  - A: Tranexamic Acid; 2023 May 18.
  - B: Transport to a Distant Specialist Neuroscience Centre; 2023 May 18.
  - C: Direct Access from the Community to Imaging; 2023 May 18.

- D: Clinical Decision Rules Selecting People with Head Injury for Imaging; 2023 May 18.
- E: Selecting Adults, Children and Infants with Head Injury for CT or MRI Head Scan in Sub-groups; 2023 May 18.
- F: Brain Injury Biomarkers and/or MRI for Predicting Post-concussion Syndrome; 2023 May 18.
- G: Brain Injury Biomarkers for Predicting Acute Post-brain Injury Complications; 2023 May 18.
- H: CT, MRI and X-ray of the Cervical Spine in People with Head Injury – Diagnostic; 2023 May 18.
- I: Admission and Observation in Hospital of People with Head Injury Who are on Anticoagulant or Antiplatelet Therapy After Normal Brain Imaging or no Indication for Early Imaging; 2023 May 18.
- J: Admission and Observation of People with Concussion Symptoms; 2023 May 18.
- K: Hospital Admission in People with Small Intracranial Injuries; 2023 May 18.
- L: Isolated Skull Fracture; 2023 May 18.
- M: Identification of Hypopituitarism (Who to Investigate); 2023 May 18.
- N: Identification of Hypopituitarism (When to Investigate); 2023 May 18.

- Developing NICE Guidelines: The Manual; 2014 Oct 31 (last updated 2025 Oct 23).

Implementation Tools

- Suggested Written Discharge Advice Cards; 2023.
- Algorithm 1: Selecting People 16 and Over for a CT Head Scan; 2023.
- Baseline Assessment Tool; 2023 May 18.
- Resource Impact Statement; 2023 May 18.
- Practical Steps to Improving the Quality of Care and Services Using NICE Guidance.

Patient Education

- Information for the Public; 2023 May 18.

Note: This patient information is intended to help patients better understand their health and their diagnosed disorders. Patients and their representatives should still consult with a licensed health care professional for evaluation of treatment options as well as answers to their personal medical questions.

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