

POST CONCUSSION/HAEMORRHAGIC SYNDROME

Information for Patients at The Spine Surgery London

Introduction

‘Post concussion’ syndrome refers to a group of symptoms that arise after a head injury. The same sort of symptoms can arise after a leakage of blood into the head (brain haemorrhage). They are quite common, often very troubling, though thankfully they go away with time.

What are the Symptoms?

Headaches – These are usually generalised headaches though may be more pronounced in one area or one side of the head than the other. They will tend to be worse towards the end of the day, though may be present at any time.

Poor Concentration – This is worse when there is surrounding noise or activity. Even simple things such as watching a long movie or reading a simple newspaper can prove difficult. As a result, you can often lose the plot of a story or fail to follow a conversation.

Poor Memory – This is usually for recent events and can affect things such as remembering to keep appointments or getting to the shops and forgetting what it was you had set out to buy. Early or long term memories tend to be preserved.

Sleep Disturbance – Often sufferers continually feel tired though are unable to get a good night’s sleep. They will tend to sleep fitfully for a few hours at a time and wake up feeling exhausted. Some may find that they sleep in the day and are awake all night.

What Things Make it Worse?

The symptoms can tend to be exacerbated by a number of things though most potently tiredness, hunger, thirst and stress from either work or social pressures.

What Measures Help?

The following are a number of areas which when tackled together may ease the symptoms while the condition persists.

A. Regulate Sleep

It is important that you try to get back into the cycle of sleeping at night and not lying in too long in the morning. Setting a period of 8 hours sleep and trying to control this with an alarm clock is sensible. It may be that you will require a fixed period of sleep in the afternoon though again sticking to a regular pattern is the key.

B. Regular Meals

The brain is particularly sensitive to fluctuations in the level of sugar in the blood. It is, therefore, very important to eat regular meals 3-4 times a day in order to maintain the level of sugar in the blood at a relatively constant level. You should certainly avoid missing meals and in particular getting up so late that you do not have breakfast. Grazing is a useful concept i.e., take your elevens' with a biscuit and likewise afternoon tea and a bedtime drink.

C. Good Hydration

It is important that you maintain the hydration of the brain as it is also very sensitive to fluctuations in this. The simplest way of monitoring your hydration is to look at the colour of the urine. If it is relatively clear, you are doing well. If it is yellow, you should be drinking more.

D. Diet

There are certain foods such as cheese and chocolate which are often thought to provoke headache, particularly with migraine sufferers. You may wish to explore excluding these from your diet though there is little hard evidence to suggest it helps patients suffering from this syndrome.

A normal diet is perfectly acceptable. However, certain things should be avoided. Caffeine containing drinks (tea, coffee, lucozade, coca-cola and some fitness drinks) should be taken only in moderation, ie 2-3 cups a day at a maximum. Similarly, alcohol should be avoided where possible. If these drinks are taken, extra measures to maintain your hydration should be pursued, i.e., you should drink more water.

Can Medications Help?

For most patients, the measures above are all that is required. For some medications are of assistance.

For the sleep disturbance medications such as 'Amitriptyline' may be help when taken at night. This is an antidepressant drug though in this instance is used to regulate sleep. You will need a prescription from your doctor.

For headache, it is best to take simple analgesic such as Aspirin or Paracetamol. Stronger medications simply do not seem to work and may indeed make the headaches worse.

What Will Happen?

Thankfully for the vast majority of patients these symptoms settle. It may however, take several months.

Further information sheets

We have also written several other information sheets on issues related to this. Listed below are some titles which may be of relevance. Please ask my office staff for any you feel to be relevant.

Disorders and Treatment

- A. Dizziness Care
- B. Medications: Read this before you take them
- C. Informed Consent For Treatments: Operations and Procedures

Administrative

- 1. **Essential Information for Private Patients of Mr Hamlyn and Dr Tillett***
- 2. About Mr Hamlyn
- 3. About Dr Tillett
- 4. Your Medical Insurance
- 5. Medico-legal reports
- 6. **The Clinics, The Hospitals and How to Find Us***
- 7. How to Find us
- 8. The Chaucer Hospital
- 9. **Title List***

Other sources of information

There is a free information pack provided by the **Brain and Spine Foundation** which covers this problem at www.brainandspine.org.uk

The British Brain and Spine Foundation is a charitable organisation and they would receive any contribution you can make with gratitude. They fund valuable research and education programs into the neurological disorders.

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