



Essential Imaging
BC PATIENT SAFETY & QUALITY COUNCIL

Minor Head Injury: A Guide for Essential Imaging

Recommendation: “CT head scans are not recommended in adults and children who have suffered minor head injuries unless positive for a head injury clinical decision rule.”¹

The BC Patient Safety & Quality Council has put together these Essential Imaging Conversation Guides for Patients to support and guide conversations with care providers based on the *BC Guidelines for Appropriate Imaging*.¹

Head Injuries Need Time to Heal

An injury to the head can be scary—a concussion affects how your brain works and results in changes in how your brain functions.²

Over the next few days to weeks you may experience headaches, dizziness, nausea, feeling unsteady, sensitivity to light or sounds and difficulties with memory or concentration.²

Take Action

Here are some ways that you can take an active role in your recovery:^{1,2}

- Take it easy and reduce stress on the brain
- Drink enough fluids and limit alcohol
- Gradually return to work
- Talk to your care provider about taking pain medication
- Avoid strenuous physical activity or exercises

When Would You Need a CT Scan of Your Head?²

Possible signs of skull fracture and bleeding in the brain include:

- Weakness on one side of your face or body
- Trouble speaking, hearing, or swallowing
- Reduced vision
- Seizures
- Relentless vomiting
- Severe headache
- One pupil is larger than the other
- Sudden fluid or blood coming out from an ear or nose
- Tenderness in a specific area on your head
- You regularly take a prescribed blood thinner

Stay Informed

Seek medical attention if you experience any of the following:²

- Your headache gets significantly worse
- You have extreme drowsiness and it is difficult to wake up
- You have difficulty recognizing people or places
- You cannot stop vomiting
- You don't feel like your usual self
- You experience seizures of the arms or legs (uncontrollable jerking)
- You have weak or numb arms or legs on one side of the body
- Your balance is off, or you have difficulty in speaking

Start the Conversation!

Talk with your care provider about appropriate medical imaging.

Learn more and find additional clinical resources at [BCPSQC.ca/imaging](https://bcpsqc.ca/imaging).



¹BC Guidelines. Appropriate Imaging for Common Situations in Primary and Emergency Care. 2020. Diagnostic Imaging. Available from: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/practitioner-professional-resources/bc-guidelines/diagnostics-imaging>

² Choosing Wisely Canada. CT scans for adults with head injuries. When you need one and when you don't. [Internet pamphlet]. Toronto Canada; 2017. [cited 2020 March 10]. Available from: <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CTs-for-adults-with-head-injuries-EN.pdf>