

UPDA 1E

Adult Head Injuries – Indications for CT and Admission

Indications for a CT scan within 1 hour of risk being identified:

- GCS less than 13 on initial assessment in the emergency department.
- GCS less than 15 at 2 hours after the injury on assessment in the emergency department.
- Suspected open or depressed skull fracture.
- Any sign of basal skull fracture (haemotympanum, 'panda' eyes, cerebrospinal fluid leakage from the ear or nose, Battle's sign).
- Post-traumatic seizure.
- Focal neurological deficit.
- More than 1 episode of vomiting.

Indications for a CT scan within 8 hours of injury:

Patients who have experienced some loss of consciousness or amnesia since then injury AND one of the following:

- Age 65 years or older.
- Any history of bleeding or clotting disorders.
- Dangerous mechanism of injury (a pedestrian or cyclist struck by a motor vehicle, an occupant ejected from a motor vehicle or a fall from a height of greater than 1 metre or 5 stairs).
- More than 30 minutes' retrograde amnesia of events immediately before the head injury.

Patients who are on warfarin and who have sustained a head injury.

Indications for admission to CDU

- All patients on warfarin and have and INR >3 who have sustained a head injury must be admitted for a period of 24 hours from the time of their head injury. Repeat scan if any symptoms at the 24 hours otherwise no repeat CT required. If INR <3 with a normal CT head and a reasonable adult may be discharged home.
- Patient presents out of hours and is awaiting CT scan to be done within 8 hours with no indications for an immediate CT scan.
- A normal CT scan but the patient remains with a GCS less than 15 or with significant post-concussion syndrome.
- A normal CT scan but the patient remains under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Patient presents with a head injury with a significant mechanism or worrying symptoms but no indication for CT scan and no responsible person to observe overnight.
- Patient requires monitoring following anaesthetic required for intubation and ventilation for a CT scan.

Indications for admission to SAU

- Patient should have been admitted to CDU but no CDU bed available.
- Patient has sustained a head injury with evidence of a new intra-cranial abnormality consistent with the injury sustained, the neuro-surgical team state no surgical intervention required and requires neuro-observations.