



You came to the emergency department after a car crash. The doctor examined you and did any tests that were needed. You are well enough to go home. This sheet explains what to expect over the next few days and when to come back.

What is it?

After a crash, it is common to feel sore and stiff, especially in the neck, back, chest and shoulders. Soreness is often worse the next day or two, then slowly gets better over one to two weeks. Some injuries show up later, so keep watching how you feel. Feeling shaken, upset or having trouble sleeping is also normal after a frightening event.

Looking after yourself at home

- Rest for the first day or two, then slowly return to your normal activities as the pain allows.
- Keep gently moving your neck and back. Staying still for a long time can make stiffness worse.
- Use a cold pack wrapped in a cloth on sore areas for 15–20 minutes, a few times a day, for the first two days.
- Do not drive until you can turn your head and move freely without pain, and you feel alert.
- Have someone stay with you for the first night if you hit your head.
- Talk to family, friends or your doctor if you feel anxious, have bad dreams or keep reliving the crash.

Medicines

- Paracetamol can help with pain, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Ibuprofen can also help, unless your doctor told you not to. Avoid it if you have a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some types of asthma, or are pregnant.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre if the pain is not improving after one week.
- See your family doctor if worry, poor sleep or low mood after the crash lasts more than two to four weeks.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Pain in your belly, chest or back that is getting worse
- Trouble breathing, or coughing up blood
- Numbness, tingling or weakness in your arms or legs
- A headache that gets worse, repeated vomiting, confusion or unusual sleepiness
- Blood in your urine, or black or bloody stools
- Feeling faint, dizzy or very pale and sweaty



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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