



Advice Sheet – Headbanging

What is headbanging?

- Knocking or banging head against something

Why do it?

- Frustration
- Communication
- Sensory
- Attention seeking
- Distraction from pain – infection, intolerances, tooth/ear/headache
- Comfort
- Stimulation
- Boredom
- Relaxation – release of tension
- Anger
- Developmental delay
- ASD

How to do it at home

- Don't panic – it's common
- Create a safe space/adapt environment
- Distraction
- Ignoring/withdrawing attention
- Distraction strategies - basket/box readily available, singing, loud noises – clapping etc, highly motivational toys
- Putting cushions down
- Lead child away
- Use hands to put pressure on child's head
- Use a vibrating cushion.
- Limited all other stimulus to help calm down.
- Try using tight fitted baseball cap.
- Be consistent (all family members and nursery staff)
- Keep a diary to identify any patterns
- Don't give in to the demand
- Stay calm
- Give a reassuring hug following the incident

<https://cityandhackneycamhs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/1-First-Steps-Parent-Self-Help-Leaflet-HEAD-BANGING.pdf>

How to move it on / What's next?

- Encouraging the young person to communicate their needs in other ways, such as verbally or signing (e.g. to ask for a drink, or have a coloured card to say “leave me alone”).
- Teaching strategies to help the young person cope with stressful situations (e.g. relaxation, stress toys).
- Encouraging the young person to express how they are feeling (e.g. point to symbols/pictures of facial expressions).

Above three points taken from <https://www.camhsnorthderbyshire.nhs.uk/learning-disabilities-self-injurious-behaviour>