

WHEN TO SEEK HELP FROM PROFESSIONALS?

Often headaches get better or go away without medication. There are several circumstances, however, in which an assessment by a doctor may be useful or important. Consult a doctor when your headache

- gets worse over time
- starts suddenly and is severe
- always occurs at the same side of the head
- does not respond to home treatment
- is severe and interrupts work or the enjoyment of everyday activities
- occurs daily



TREATMENT

Some people are able to treat their tension headaches without medication.

The occasional tension headache can be cured by having a shower, a massage, or some sleep.

An ice compress, a heating pad or a massage of the tight areas in neck and shoulders can also help.

Also, if the patient recognizes what's causing stress and triggers the headache, they can avoid these factors and get better.

Relaxation techniques, such as breathing exercises, can help making the headaches less frequent.

In some cases, the headaches are caused by emotional or stress triggers.



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Headache

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WHAT IS HEADACHE?

Headache is the word for apain in one or more areas of the head. Almost everyone experiences headaches now and then, especially when sick, tired or stressed.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF HEADACHE?

There are 3 types of headaches¹:

	Tension	Migraine	Cluster
Type of pain	Steady, dull, pressing or tightening	Severe, throbbing	Severe, sharp
Location of pain	Both sides of neck and head	Usually one side of the head	Around one eye
Who is affected?	Men and women	Mostly women	Mostly males

Tension headaches

- are the most common type of headaches and many adults experience them

- can happen at separate times or can continue as one long headache for a long time (for example, every day or for more than 15 days a month)
- usually last a few hours; sometimes they are shorter (for example, 30 minutes), sometimes longer (for example, 7 days)
- often start during the day and get worse throughout the day
- can be caused by stressful events

Clusterheadaches

- are extremely painful but short (15 minutes to 3 hours)
- the eye on the same side as the pain may become teary, droopy or its pupil may become small

Migraineheadaches

- are less common than tension headaches and can last between 2 hours and 3 days
- are made worse by activity, bright lights and noise
- women who have migraines often find that their headaches occur or worsen around the time of their menstrual periods

HEADACHE TRIGGERS

Triggers are not direct causes of the headache, but factors that can provoke a headache. Here is a list of some common triggers.

- Food and drink**



triggers:

caffeine, alcohol, salty food, MSG, skipping meals, smoking

- Emotional triggers:**

problems at work, anxiety, an emotional crisis. It's important to note that emotions don't cause your headaches, but they just make you more vulnerable to them and can make them worse.

- Environmental triggers:**

bright light, different kinds of smells (for example perfume, tobacco, gasoline), loud noise, altitude, change of weather

- Stress triggers:**

strenuous exercise, excessive physical work, illness, not enough sleep or too much sleep

- Chemical triggers:**

changes in hormone levels (pre & post-menstrual period), low blood sugar

^{1 1} Barbara Sheen (2003), Diseases and Disorders: Headache