TUNE IN TO YOUR HEALTH INCENTIVE CAMPAIGN

Headaches

Wishin' and hopin' and thinkin' and prayin' won't make your headaches go away.

Almost nothing stops you dead in your tracks like a splitting headache. Sometimes, almost nothing seems to help. You might be glad to know that, instead of wishing and hoping, there are things you can do to remedy headache pain and prevent future headaches.

If you suffer from regular headaches, you're not alone. Nearly 90 percent of the population has had at least one headache in the last year, and many sufferers experience not only the pain, but also a diminished quality of life, and out-of-pocket expenses, which add up fast. In fact, it is estimated that Americans spend more than $4 billion each year on over-the-counter pain relievers to ease their headaches.

The good news is that in the last 20 years, medical research has identified new insights into pain management. The new understanding has led to advances in treatment and renewed hope for longtime sufferers.

Types of Headaches

Although there are different types of headaches—150 to be exact—tension headaches and migraine headaches are the most common.

Tension headaches.

Tension headaches are experienced by as many as 90 percent of adults, and are the most common kind of headache. Also known as muscle contraction or stress headaches, tension headaches are typically associated with a dull, aching pain that affects both sides of the head.

Migraine headaches.

The second most common type of headache, migraines affect approximately 28 million Americans. Migraine headaches typically affect one side of the head, have a pulsating or throbbing sensation, and are often accompanied by nausea or vomiting and sensitivity to light and sound.

Signs & Symptoms To Look Out For

Tension or Migraine?

Now that we know a little more about the two main types of headaches, let's learn about each in detail, getting a better grasp on the symptoms associated with each. The following symptoms will help you better distinguish between tension headaches and migraine headaches.

Tension Headache

+ Mild to moderate pain or throbbing in the forehead, above the ears, or near the back of the head
+ Accompanied by neck and shoulder pain
+ Begins gradually, usually near mid-day
+ May last anywhere from 30 minutes to several days

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Headaches (continued)

- Accompanied by irritability, trouble concentrating, and sensitivity to noise and/or light

Migraine Headache
- Moderate to severe pain, often affecting only one side of the head
- Blurred vision
- Nausea, vomiting, and upset stomach
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Extreme sensitivity to light and/or sound

When to Seek Care For Your Headaches

Severe headaches that are long-lasting and accompanied by some of the symptoms listed here can be a sign of a more serious condition. See your healthcare provider right away if your headache includes any of the following characteristics.

- If the headache is accompanied by fever, stiff neck, confusion, seizures, double vision, weakness, numbness, or difficulty speaking and/or understanding
- If the headache is severe and cannot be relieved with home treatment
- If your unexplained headaches continue to occur more than three times a week
- If headaches occur during or after physical exertion, sexual activity, coughing, or sneezing
- If your headaches awaken you from a sound sleep or are worse first thing in the morning

Treating Headaches at Home

There are a number of ways you can help to ensure headaches don’t take you out of the game. The following suggestions can help you take control of a headache before it takes control of you.

- Try taking an over-the-counter pain reliever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol), aspirin (Bayer), ibuprofen (Motrin), or naproxen (Aleve) as soon as you feel that a headache is coming on. Be sure to follow label directions to prevent rebound headaches.
- When you feel a headache coming on, retreat to a dark, quiet place and relax. Often times, a small nap can relieve your headache.
- Place a cool, wet towel or cold pack on the location of your headache or forehead.
- Do not apply heat—it tends to intensify headaches.

Preventing Headaches

Most would agree, an occasional headache is probably just a fact of life. That being said, nobody should have to deal with frequent and severe headaches. The following prevention techniques should be employed if you’d like to cope more effectively with headaches.

- Reduce emotional stress. Take time to relax before and after stressful situations (headache triggers) that have caused headaches in the past.
- Reduce physical stress. Be sure to get plenty of rest each night so you are better prepared to face stress each day. If you sit at a desk, stretch often. Become aware of jaw clenching and tightness in the neck and shoulders and work to eliminate these habits.
- Exercise on a regular basis. Try to get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week.

Take Test