

What is a headache?

A headache is a symptom that can have many causes. Sometimes a headache is caused by:

- a cold or other viral illness
- a high fever
- a head injury
- hunger (many teens get a headache in the late afternoon when they are hungry).
- dehydration

A tension headache is a headache caused by tense muscles in the face, neck, or scalp. These headaches give a feeling of tightness all around the head. The neck muscles also become sore and tight. Tension headaches can be caused by staying in one position for a long time, such as reading, playing video games or using a computer. Many people get tension headaches as a reaction to stress (such as pressure for better grades or family conflicts). If you get a lot of headaches, see your healthcare provider. They may be caused by something besides tension.

How long does it last?

Many headaches caused by illness go away when the fever comes down. Others come and go during the illness. Tension headaches usually last from a few hours to a day and you may have them often.

How can I take care of myself?

- General headache care
 - Lie down and rest until you feel better. It is important to get enough sleep.
 - If you are hungry, eat some food or drink fruit juice.
 - Take ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) as soon as the headache begins.
 - Put a cool, wet washcloth on your forehead.
- **Tension headaches**

If you have been checked by your healthcare provider and still have tension headaches, try the following to help ease the pain:

- When you get a headache, lie down and relax. Take acetaminophen or ibuprofen as soon as the headache starts. (Avoid aspirin if you have a fever.) The medication is more effective if it is started early.

- If something is bothering you, talk about it and get it off your mind.
- Don't skip meals if doing so brings on headaches.
- Encourage lots of water; hydration is one of the keys to preventing headaches
- Cut back on the amount of caffeine in your diet.
- Stretch and massage any tight neck muscles.
- Get regular exercise, which releases natural painkillers (endorphins).
- To prevent tension headaches, take breaks from activities that require sustained concentration. Do relaxation exercises during the breaks.
- If overachievement causes headaches, get out of the fast track.

Keep headache log to bring with you to your next visit. Please include day, time, activity when headache started, how long it lasted , and if took medication.

When should I call my healthcare provider?

Call IMMEDIATELY if:

- The pain is severe and persists more than 2 hours after you take pain medication.
- You have trouble seeing, thinking, talking, or walking.
- Your neck is stiff.
- You are feeling very sick.

Call during office hours if:

- Headaches are a recurrent problem for you.
- The headache has lasted more than 24 hours even though you have taken pain medicines.
- You have other concerns or questions.