

Headache

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What is a headache?

Headache is defined as a pain occurring in any region of the head. Headaches may be isolated to a specific region or may be located in one or both areas of the head, radiate across the head, or have an extremely tight and firm quality. The pain may be sharp, throbbing or dull. The onset of the pain may be gradual or sudden, lasting from less than an hour to several days.



According to the World Health Organization report, approximately half of adults worldwide experience headaches regularly, making them one of the most widespread medical complaints. Most headaches aren't reflecting a serious health condition and may be relieved by a short rest, some food or water, or over-the-counter pain relievers.

How are headaches classified?

According to International Headache Society classification, headaches are classified into 3 main categories:

- **Primary headaches**
Primary headaches are discrete illnesses that are caused by malfunctioning of brain pain-sensitive structures. Changes in chemical activity in the brain, problems with

nerves, blood vessels and muscles of the head and neck play a significant role in primary headaches.

The most common primary headaches include:

- Migraines
- Cluster headaches
- Tension headaches
- **Secondary headaches**
Secondary headaches are symptoms that reflect diseases and health conditions that activate pain-sensitive nerves of the head.
A broad group of medical conditions – varying in severity – can cause secondary headaches, including:
 - Acute sinusitis
 - Ear infections
 - Brain aneurysms
 - Brain tumor
 - Brain injury & post-concussion syndrome
 - Stroke
 - Dehydration
 - Dental problems
 - Encephalitis & Meningitis
 - Glaucoma
 - Hangover
 - High blood pressure
 - Flu
 - Medications & overuse of pain medications
 - Carbon monoxide poisoning
 - Panic disorder and panic attacks
 - Pressure from tight headgear
 - Neuralgias

What can trigger my headaches?

Some lifestyle factors may trigger headaches, including:

- Stress
- Skipped meals
- Caffeine
- Lack of sleep or too much sleep
- Strong scents
- Smoking
- Alcohol, particularly red wine
- Certain foods, such as aged cheese and processed meat
- Poor posture

How can I ease my headaches on my own?

In case if you prefer to manage your headache avoiding painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, here are some self-care strategies:

- Drink plenty of water
- Take time to rest and try to relax
- Apply icepack to your head or neck
- Take a bath or shower
- Try a head, neck and shoulder massage therapy to reduce muscle tension

When should I see a doctor?

Seek Emergency Care, if:

- You injured your head badly
- Your headache is extremely severe and came on suddenly
- Your headache is accompanied by:
 - Confusion
 - Fainting
 - High fever, feeling hot and shivering, having neck stiffness or a rash
 - Weakness, numbness and paralysis on one side of the body
 - Trouble walking
 - Vision problems
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - The white part of the eye turns red

Schedule Doctor's Appointment, if:

- Your headache is more severe and/or often than usual
- Your jaw hurts when eating
- You have blurred or double vision
- You have scalp soreness
- Your headache interferes with your daily activities
- The pain doesn't improve or worsen from pain killers