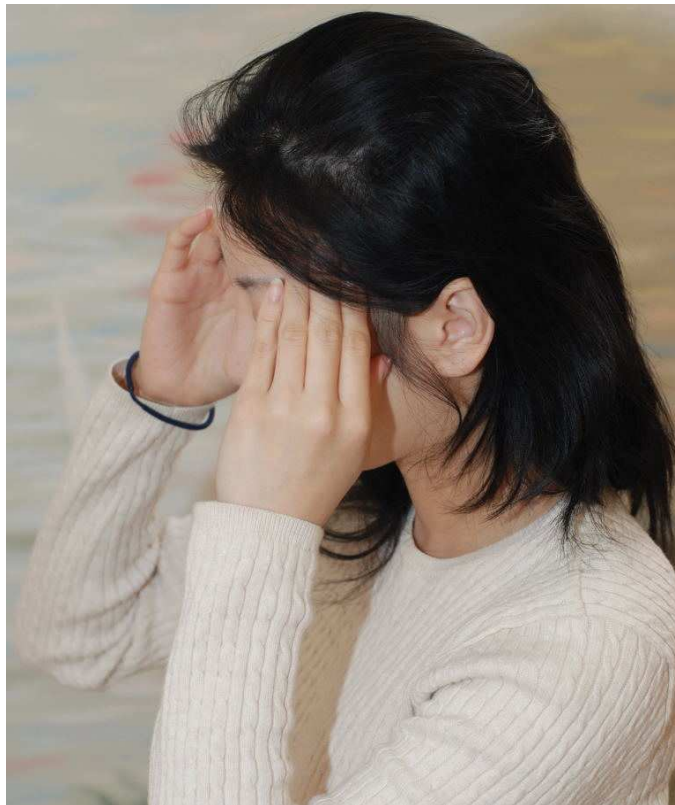


## **HEADACHE**

Seven in 10 people have at least one headache a year, the majority of headaches last for only a few hours, but some can persist for weeks.

With a headache, pain may occur in only one part of the head, such as above the eyes, or it may involve the entire head. The type of pain experienced varies; it may be constant and dull or sudden and sharp. And sometimes other symptoms, such as nausea, occur at the same time depending on the type of headache.

**Tension headaches** typically feel like a tightening on both sides of the head. They can last for minutes or days, and can happen frequently. Tension headaches are often the result of stress or bad posture, which causes tightening of the muscles in the neck and the scalp. Tension headaches often worsen with noisy and hot, stuffy environments. This type of headache occurs mostly in women over age 20.



**Migraine headaches** are intense and throbbing, often involve one side of the head, and can make you sensitive to light or noise. Migraines last from hours up to three days and are more common in women. Migraine sufferers usually have their first attack before age 30, but **they can also occur in children as young as age three**. Migraines recur at intervals of varying length.

Some people have attacks several times a month; others have less than one a year. Most people find that migraine attacks occur less frequently and become less severe as they get older.

**Cluster headaches** are non-throbbing and usually are felt on one side of the head behind an eye. More common in men, they can happen over several days and usually last 30 to 45 minutes. They generally occur between one and four times a day. Like migraines, cluster headaches are likely to be related to an increased blood flow as a result of the blood vessels in the brain widening.

Like other types of pain, **headaches can serve as warning signals of more serious disorders**, including those related to meningitis as well as those resulting from diseases of the sinuses, spine, neck, ears, and teeth.

### **TREATMENT**

When headaches occur three or more times a month, preventive treatment is usually recommended. Drug therapy, stress reduction, and elimination of certain foods from the diet are the most common methods of preventing and controlling migraine and other vascular headaches. Regular exercise, such as swimming or vigorous walking, can also reduce the frequency and severity of migraine headaches.

### **OUTLOOK**

Not all headaches require medical attention. But some types of headache are signals of more serious disorders and call for prompt medical care. These include: sudden, severe headache or sudden headache associated with a stiff neck; headaches associated with fever, convulsions, or accompanied by confusion or loss of consciousness; headaches following a blow to the head, or associated with pain in the eye or ear; persistent headache in a person who was previously headache free; and **recurring headache in children**.

### **CAUSES**

There are many possible causes of headache that determine the site and nature of the pain. About three in four of all headaches are caused by tension in the scalp and neck muscles.

**If you have a headache that lasts more than 24 hours and is severe, or accompanied by other symptoms, such as problems with vision or vomiting, medical help should be sought immediately.**