

## **What causes a headache?**

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- Many different things can cause headaches.
- Playing too long in the sun, bumping the head, and stress are just a few of the things that can cause headaches.
- Infections and illness can cause headaches.
- Headaches are a common side effect to many kinds of medication.
- Children often describe ear infections and sinusitis as a headache.
- Certain food and drinks can sometimes cause headaches.
- Headaches can result from too little sleep.

## **Who can get a headache?**

- Both children and adults can get headaches.

## **What are the symptoms of a headache?**

- Children will complain that their head hurts.
- Headaches usually cause mild to moderate pain.
- They can last from 30 minutes to 7 days.
- Toddlers, who can't tell you how they feel, may cry, turn pale, bang their head, or vomit.

## **How is a headache treated?**

- Most headaches can be treated at home.
- Acetaminophen, such as Tylenol, or ibuprofen, such as Advil, are often given to treat pain.
- Do not give aspirin to children under age 16 before talking to your doctor first.
- Keep a record of your child's headaches. Write down how long they last and what you think might have caused it.
- Have your child take a nap in a cool, dark room.

## **Tips on reducing the pain**

- Lie down in a dark, quiet room.
- Put a cold compress or rag over your forehead.
- Massage your scalp using a lot of pressure.
- Put pressure on your temples.

## **How can headaches be prevented?**

- Make sure that your child gets enough sleep and eats healthy.
- Help your child relax as soon as symptoms begin.
- Keep a record of your child's headaches and avoid activities that seem to trigger them.
- If your child sees a doctor for his headaches, make a follow-up appointment to make sure the treatment is working.

## **What about migraines?**

- Both children and adults can get migraines.

- Like headaches, migraines can be caused by many things, including stress, illness, or infection.
- Migraines cause severe throbbing, pounding pain in the head.
- Migraines can also cause a spinning feeling that begins suddenly and lasts only minutes. This symptom is common in toddlers.
- Migraines can cause visual changes, such as seeing bright lights followed by "black holes" or sensitivity to light.
- Migraines can last from 2 to 72 hours.
- Migraines tend to run in families.

## **Foods that may trigger migraines**

Aged, canned, cured or processed meat, including bologna, game, ham, herring, hot dogs, pepperoni and sausage

Meat tenderizer

Aged cheese

Monosodium glutamate (MSG)

Alcoholic beverages, especially red wine

Nuts and peanut butter

Aspartame

Onions, except small amounts for flavoring

Avocados

Papaya

Beans, including pole, broad, lima, Italian, navy, pinto and garbanzo

Passion fruit

Brewer's yeast, including fresh yeast coffee cake, donuts and sourdough bread

Pea pods

Caffeine (in excess)

Pickled, preserved or marinated foods, such as olives and pickles, and some snack foods

Canned soup or bouillon cubes

Raisins

Chocolate, cocoa and carob

Red plums

Cultured dairy products, such as buttermilk and sour cream

Sauerkraut

Figs

Seasoned salt

Lentils

Snow peas

Soy sauce

## **When should I call the doctor?**

- Call if your child has headaches and seems ill or has signs of infection.
- Call if he has visual changes, feels tingly, is weak, has a fever, or seems confused while he has the headache.
- Call if your child cannot do his regular activities because of headaches, such as going to school or playing sports.
- Call if your child has severe pain or the headache makes him cry, hold his head, or unable to move a part of his body.
- Call if you have questions or concerns about your child's condition.

## Quick Answers

- Headaches can be caused by many different things, such as illness, stress, or infection.
- Both children and adults can get headaches.
- Headaches usually cause mild to moderate pain.
- Acetaminophen, such as Tylenol, or ibuprofen, such as Advil, are often given to treat pain.
- Keep a record of your child's headaches and avoid activities that seem to trigger them.
- Migraines cause severe throbbing, pounding pain in the head.
- Call if your child cannot do his regular activities because of headaches, such as missing school or playing sports.

## References

- Hammond D MD and Izenberg N MD. When Kids Get Headaches. KidsHealth. 2001 September (cited 2001 November 21). Available from: URL: [http://www.kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat\\_id=&article\\_set=22921](http://www.kidshealth.org/PageManager.jsp?dn=KidsHealth&lic=1&ps=107&cat_id=&article_set=22921)
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