

Keeping a Headache Diary

Work with your health care provider to determine the best treatment for your headaches. Use this form to note the following information for every headache you experience in the next 30 to 60 days:

Date and time the headache occurred:

- Type** of pain (circle all that apply): dull, aching, throbbing, piercing, squeezing or excruciating.
- Location** of pain (circle): one side of the head, both sides, front or back of the head, over or behind one eye, or base of the skull or neck.
- Accompanying symptoms** (circle): nausea, vomiting, dizziness, tense head or neck, muscle contraction, senses (eyesight, hearing or touch) affected. Note whether any of these symptoms started before the headache.
- Duration** of the headache: _____
- Headache occurred** during (circle): normal activity, physical exertion, stressful event, menstrual cycle, lack of sleep or change in sleep pattern.
- Foods and beverages** consumed within preceding 24 hours: _____
- Your location** when the headache occurred (circle): home, work, driving, shopping, outdoors or other _____
- Had you missed a meal?** Yes___ No___
- What was the weather like?** _____
- Were you exposed to odors** (e.g., perfume, chemicals or smoke)? Yes___ No___
- Had you bumped your head or suffered a head trauma?** Yes___ No___

Make note of the medications you take for your headaches; any herbal remedies you take; other prescription or over-the-counter medications; your family medical history, including any history of headache; other personal medical conditions; and whether you have routinely been under stress.

More Headache Tips

- **Learn** to adjust your expectations. The distance between your dreams and reality may create tension and stress.
- **Try** taking your nonprescription pain reliever with a cup of coffee or tea. Caffeine helps your body absorb these medications, allowing you to get back to normal faster.
- **Always** take headache medicines only as directed. Overuse can lead to rebound headaches.
- **For** relief, apply cold packs to the forehead and temples, warm packs to the neck and back of the head.
- **If** you suspect you habitually grind your teeth (bruxism), consult your dentist, who may prescribe a mouth guard. Worn on the upper teeth during sleep, it can help ease symptoms that cause headache or jaw pain.
- **Tell** your provider if you experience early-morning headaches, which may be a sign of depression.
- **Report** any "exertional" headaches — following activities such as weight lifting, running, coughing or sneezing — to your provider, who may prescribe tests to rule out any underlying organic cause.
- **Avoid** the food additive monosodium glutamate (MSG) as it is a common trigger for headaches. **Self-defense:** Ask restaurants to prepare food without it, and scan food package labels for MSG. It is widely used in Asian food, processed meats and canned goods.

Final thought: When it comes to headaches, you can be in control. Knowing your triggers, taking good care of yourself and working with your health care provider to get proper treatment can help you live a more headache-free life.



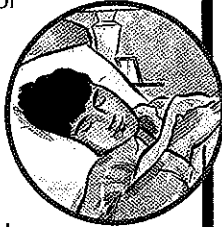
HEADACHES: A POSITIVE APPROACH

FROM TRACKING TO
TREATMENT, PREVENTION
AND RELIEF



WHEN YOUR HEAD ACHES

Headaches account for millions of lost workdays a year. Most are "tension" headaches, which researchers now believe are caused by changes in brain chemicals. Tension headaches and more severe forms, such as migraines, can be triggered by many factors, including stress and certain foods.



Whether your headaches are rare or frequent, you don't have to live with the discomfort. You can learn to manage the pain and even prevent many headaches from starting in the first place. **Here's a simple four-step plan:**

- 1. Start a headache diary.** Use the form on the facing panel to track your headaches. This record will help you and your health care provider identify your personal triggers and diagnose the type of headache, both of which are necessary to determine the best prevention and treatment.
- 2. Make time to relax.** Stress is the most commonly recognized trigger.
- 3. Take care of yourself.** Eating well, getting enough rest and staying physically active can make you more resistant to stress-induced headaches.
- 4. Get help if needed.** If you continue to suffer frequent or severe headaches, check with your health care provider. Many treatment options are available.

Biofeedback: One Way to Learn Relaxation

Biofeedback is an effective relaxation training technique for both tension headaches and migraines. **How it works:** A finger thermometer or computer is used to measure your body temperature, muscle tension or brain wave activity. Monitoring changes in the results can help you learn to recognize body cues and practice relaxation techniques to control them.

PREVENTING HEADACHES

STICK to a regular sleep schedule. Going to bed and getting up at the same times each day can help regulate your biological clock, reduce stress and avoid headaches that result from too much or too little sleep.

DON'T skip meals. It causes blood sugar levels to drop, a common headache trigger.

STAY hydrated. Drink plenty of water throughout the day; dehydration can contribute to headache.

AVOID the three Cs: Chocolate, citrus fruit and ripened cheeses all contain substances called amines that can trigger headaches.

LIMIT other dietary triggers. **Examples:** processed and cured meats (e.g., hot dogs); alcohol, especially red wine; nuts; fava beans, lima beans and snow peas; and anything pickled, fermented or marinated.

DON'T quit caffeine abruptly. Studies show that even people who drink just one cup of coffee per day may suffer withdrawal symptoms if they go cold turkey. Instead, taper off slowly over a period of several weeks or months.

CLEAR the air. Strong chemicals or odors can trigger migraines. Keep your home and work environments well ventilated.

WATCH the glare factor. Make sure natural light from windows or artificial lighting isn't directly hitting your computer screen and causing glare, or use a glare filter that attaches to the screen.

When Not to Wait

Seek medical attention if a headache:

- Is chronic and progressive
- Persists for two to three days
- Occurs after a blow to your head
- Interferes with your normal life and ability to function
- Is new or different than headaches you've had before
- Is sudden and severe or the worst headache of your life
- Is accompanied by fever, stiff neck, rash, mental confusion, seizures, double vision, weakness, numbness or speaking difficulties (all signs of stroke or infection such as meningitis)



RELIEVING HEADACHES

Choose a PAIN RELIEVER. Despite all the over-the-counter choices in drugstore aisles, there are essentially three types:

- 1. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs).** These include aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen sodium and ketoprofen. Possible side effects include stomach irritation and stomach bleeding, which can be prevented or reduced by taking the drug with meals.
- 2. Acetaminophen.** Both NSAIDs and acetaminophen relieve pain, but acetaminophen may be the better choice if you have a sensitive stomach. Heavy, prolonged use may cause liver damage, however.
- 3. Combination medicines.** Some remedies combine aspirin or acetaminophen (or both) with caffeine. In some individuals, such combinations may be more effective at reducing pain than single-drug medicines. Adverse effects from each drug may still occur.

Note: Always use your medicines exactly as directed. Follow label instructions carefully, and don't drink alcohol when using pain relievers.

Take it EASY. A calm environment helps alleviate pain. At home, find a dark, quiet spot and lie down.

Seek HEAT or COLD. Warm and cold packs and warm and cold showers can all help relieve headache pain, depending on your preference. Be careful not to freeze or burn your skin.

What about watching TV?

Watching TV or playing video games can cause eyestrain. But eyestrain is rarely the sole cause of headaches. Poor posture and vision problems may also be factors. If you get frequent headaches during these activities, try sitting up straight and consider getting an eye exam.

