



Headaches

Five Types of Headaches

It's critical to identify which type of headache you suffer from—tension, cluster, sinus, rebound, or migraine—so your doctor can prescribe the correct treatment.

Following is a description of each of the five types of headaches:

Tension Headaches

Tension headaches, the most common type, feel like a constant ache or pressure around the head, especially at the temples or back of the head and neck. Not as severe as migraines, they are not usually accompanied by nausea and vomiting, and they rarely stop people from continuing their regular activities. Over-the-counter treatments, such as aspirin, ibuprofen, or acetaminophen, usually are sufficient to treat tension headaches, which experts believe may be caused by contraction of neck and scalp muscles (including in response to stress), and possibly changes in brain chemicals.

Cluster Headaches

Cluster headaches are recurring headaches that occur in groups or cycles. The headaches appear suddenly and are characterized by severe, debilitating pain on one side of the head often accompanied by a watery eye and nasal congestion or a runny nose on the same side of the face. During an attack, sufferers are often restless, unable to get comfortable and not likely to lie down the way someone with a migraine usually does. The cause of cluster headaches is unknown, but they may have some genetic component. There is no cure, but medications can reduce the frequency and duration of attacks.

Sinus Headaches

When a sinus becomes inflamed, usually through an infection, it can cause pain. It usually comes with a fever, and can, if necessary, be diagnosed by MRI or CT scan, or by the presence of pus viewed through a fiber-optic scope. Headaches due to sinus infection can be treated with antibiotics, antihistamines or decongestants.

Rebound Headaches

Overuse of painkillers for headaches can lead to rebound headaches. Culprits include over-the-counter medications like aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen, as well as prescription drugs. One theory for the cause of rebound headaches is that too much medication can cause the brain to shift into an excited state, triggering more headaches. Another is that the headaches are a symptom of withdrawal as the level of medicine drops in the bloodstream.

Migraine Headaches

Migraine headaches come from a neurological disorder and are defined by certain criteria:

- At least five previous episodes of headaches
- Lasting between four hours and 72 hours
- Having at least two out of four of these features: one-sided pain, throbbing pain, moderate-to-severe pain, and pain that interferes with, is worsened by, or prohibits routine activity
- Having at least one associated feature: nausea and/or vomiting, or, if those are not present, then sensitivity to light and sound

What Happens During a Migraine?

An attack of migraine is divided into four distinct stages, plus the interval in between attacks:

1) Prodrome

This phase may start hours or days before an episode. The prodrome phase has many different symptoms that may make a person aware that a headache is about to come. These include sleepiness, irregularity, bloating, cravings, thirst, and light and sound sensitivity.

2) Aura

Not as many migraines are accompanied by the second phase, which is aura. This is commonly a visual disturbance that precedes the headache phase. Some migraine sufferers develop blind spots, see geometric patterns or flashing, colorful lights; or lose vision on one side. These symptoms can be compounded with weakness in the muscles and speech difficulty.

3) Migraine Headache

Migraine pain usually appears on one side of the head, and throbbing pain may be present. In addition to the pain in the head, migraine headaches also can bring nausea, vomiting, and scalp tenderness to someone living with migraines.

4) Postdrome

The last phase occurs as the migraine is beginning to leave the body. Other signs of the migraine (for example, inability to eat, problems with concentration, or fatigue) may linger after the pain has disappeared.



Wellness