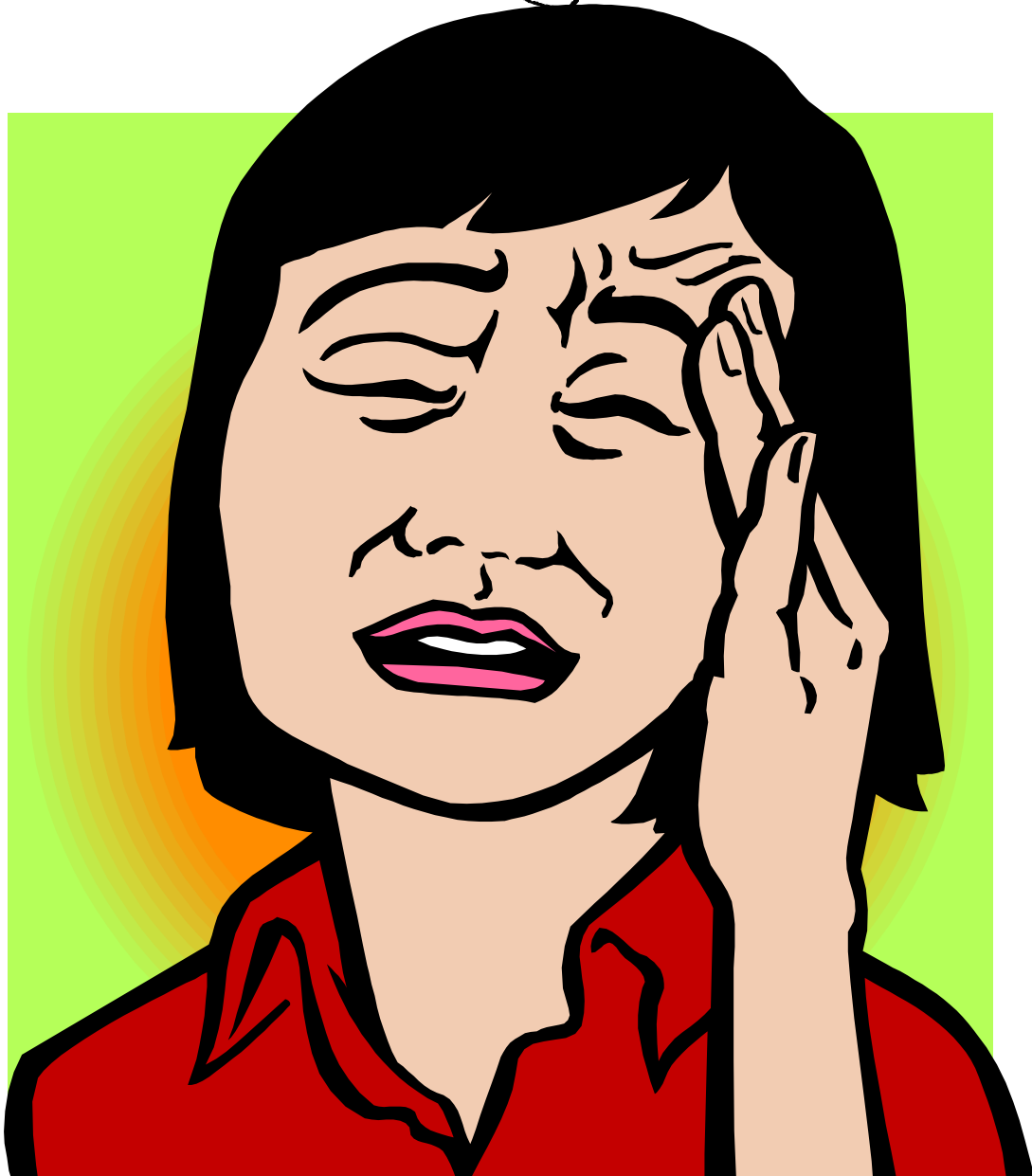


HEADACHES: CAUSES & CURES



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Wednesday,
April 13, 2005

Headaches, Types & Treatment

Headache is one of the most common ailments affecting thousands of Americans every day. Migraine alone directly affects about 12% of the population. The symptoms and pain associated with the various types of headache can be difficult for your doctor to recognize. This makes it hard to pin point exactly what type of headache is the problem and the best treatment for it.

Almost everyone gets headaches, but not all headaches are the same. Some are a mild twinge while others are so severe you cannot function.

There are many different types of headache, each brought on by different causes and requiring a different treatment.

A headache is rarely the symptom of a severe disorder, such as a brain tumor. However, it does mean something is wrong, so it should not be ignored. It is particularly important to seek professional help if your headaches are severe or they keep coming back.

You don't have to just 'live with' headaches. They are not normal! Effective treatment is available for all types of headache, even migraines. By recording when and how your headaches occur, you can help your doctor diagnose and find the right treatment for them.

Sinus headache

Symptoms: A sinus headache usually occurs as a gnawing pain over or under both eyes. It usually accompanies blocked sinuses caused by bad cold, flu or allergies and can be associated with a rise in temperature. The affected area may be painful when touched. The headache gets worse as the day goes on and increases in intensity if you bend forward.

Frequency: Sinus headaches can occur at any time.

Possible Causes: Sinuses are air-filled spaces in the facial bones around the nose, which are part of the respiratory system. Sinus headaches are one symptom of sinusitis, where your sinuses become infected and inflamed. Allergies may also cause the mucous production necessary to cause sinusitis.

Treatment: Lifestyle: If possible stay indoors in a room with an even temperature, as a dry overheated environment could make your high temperature and nasal congestion symptoms worse.

- Steam inhalation may be useful to try and clear the sinuses.
- Lymphatic drainage will also help drain the sinuses.
- Percussing the sinuses will also help break up mucus.
- Avoid Dairy – the casein protein in it causes increased mucous production in the body

See your doctor if - Your symptoms last for more than a couple of days.

Temporal Arteritis

Temporal arteritis is not common, and often affects people over the age of 55.

Symptoms: Head pain is described as persistent, waxing and waning throughout the day, and may occur anywhere on the head, although it is often over the temples. It may be severe, burning and throbbing in the early course of the disease and non-throbbing later. Other symptoms are eyesight problems, mild fever, weight loss and jaw pain when chewing.

Frequency & Duration: Once diagnosed long term management can prevent recurrences.

Possible Causes: Temporal arteritis is caused by inflammation of the arteries which supply your head with blood. There is some research that points toward a possible autoimmune disorder (similar to Lupus and Rheumatoid Arthritis).

Treatment Medication - If your symptoms are suggestive your medical doctor will perform a blood test and possibly a biopsy. Anti-inflammatory medication is often prescribed to reduce the inflammation of the affected arteries and protect eyesight.

See your doctor if - You have these symptoms, or if you are over 50 years of age and develop a new, persistent headache as serious complications may develop and these can be avoided by prompt treatment.

Cluster Headaches

Cluster headaches are rare, severe and mainly affect men.

Description: They are called cluster headaches because the attacks come in groups. The pain arrives with little, if any, warning, and it has been described as the most severe and intense of any headache type. It generally lasts from 30 to 45 minutes, although it might persist for several hours before it disappears. Unfortunately, it can reoccur later in the day. Most sufferers experience one to four headaches a day during a cluster period.

Cluster headaches frequently surface during the morning or late at night; the cluster cycle can last weeks or months and then can disappear for months or years. Clusters often occur during spring or autumn and, thus, are often incorrectly associated with allergies. Approximately 10 percent of the sufferers, however, experience chronic cluster headaches that occur all year long.

It is estimated that less than one percent of the population are victims of cluster headaches, and they encounter the headache somewhere between the ages of 20 and 45. More men (about five to one) than women suffer from cluster headaches.

Frank Capra, the famous film director and producer, described a cluster headache he had while sitting in a hotel:

"Suddenly a huge phantom bird sank three talons of its angry claws deeply into my head and face and tried to lift me. No warnings, no preliminary signs. Just wham! A massive, killing pain came over my right eye. I clutched my head, stumbled out to the broad lawns and over the hedges to the deserted tennis courts and then, there in the dark, I moaned, I panted. Ballooned my cheeks, blew out short bursts of air, licked my hot lips, wiped tears that poured out of my right eye, and clawed at

my head trying to uproot the fiendish talons from their iron grip. One racking hour later the talons let go. The paroxysm eased as suddenly as it had convulsed. Euphoria set in. It's gone! Whopping headache, but it's gone!..."

Symptoms: Severe pain developing around or behind one eye, which usually occurs at nights and wakes the sufferer from sleep. Congestion of the eye and nose on the affected side produces tears and nasal blockage and discharge on that side.

The cluster headache was once considered a type of migraine, because it is vascular. Unfortunately, it is possible for a person to suffer from both migraines and clusters, although it is rare.

The headache is usually unilateral and rarely switches sides from one attack to another. You might feel the pain begin around one eye, "like a nail or knife stabbing or piercing" your eye, or as if someone "were pulling out" your eye; it may be accompanied by a tearing or bloodshot eye and a runny nose on the side of the headache. It can radiate from the eye to the forehead, temple and cheek on the same side. The pain of a cluster headache has been described as piercing, burning, throbbing, pulsating, and so excruciating that most victims cannot sit still and feel compelled to rock in a chair, walk back and forth, or bang their heads against something.

Frequency & Duration: Cluster Headache usually lasts between 15 and 90 minutes and can occur almost daily in groups or "clusters" for days or weeks at a time. Then they may disappear for a year or more.

Possible Causes: There is some evidence that:

- Excessive smoking and /or alcohol consumption can trigger an attack. They are vasoconstrictors and decrease blood flow to the brain.
- Myofascial trigger points in the suboccipital musculature (just under the bump under the back of the skull) can cause referred pain symptoms similar to Cluster Headaches.

Treatment:

- Pure oxygen inhalation is also used to alleviate an attack.
- Deep breathing will also increase Oxygen perfusion into the blood and may provide relief.
- Deep tissue massage of the affected trigger points and chiropractic adjustments of the upper cervical region may reduce the severity of these headaches if caught early enough.

See your doctor if - You think you suffer from cluster headache.

Rebound Headaches

Taking analgesic medication, prescription or over the counter, on a frequent or daily basis can result in daily or near-daily headaches.

Migraine (Vascular) Headache

Migraines affect one in eight adults in the developed world. People of any age can suffer, although adults aged 25-34 are most commonly affected, and women two or three times as frequently as men.

Symptoms: The main migraine symptom is a moderate to severe throbbing pain, usually on just one side of the head. This is often accompanied by nausea (feeling sick), cold hands, vomiting and sensitivity to light and sound.

A migraine where people suffer an 'aura' or warning, 10 to 30 minutes before the migraine begins, only occurs in one in five cases. The aura may take many forms: lines or spots before the eyes, total darkness, tingling or numbness in the limbs and speech impairment. This can be a frightening experience.

Eighty percent of migraines have no aura, although a few days beforehand you may feel irritable, lethargic and experience food cravings.

Frequency & Duration: A migraine attack occurs on average once a month and usually lasts between 4 and 72 hours.

Possible Causes: There is a wide range of possible triggers associated with migraine.

They include:

- Caffeine withdrawal (even 1 cup per day & one day without it will show signs of withdrawal).
- Aspartame toxicity
- Bright or flashing lights irregular sleeping or eating patterns
- Loud noises and strong smells sudden weather or altitude changes
- Emotional factors, such as stress, fatigue or excitement. Women may find fluctuating hormone levels (due to ovulation, menstruation, or birth control pills) are a contributing factor.
- Your diet can also make you vulnerable to migraines: red wine, cheese, chocolate, nuts, soy sauce, citrus fruit, alcohol, excess caffeine (eg. cola, tea, coffee) and some food additives (aspartame, monosodium, glutamate, sodium nitrate) are all possible triggers.
- Nervous system stress – reversed cervical curve, brain stem pressure, spinal cord tension (every patient with migraines in this office).

Treatment: Lifestyle - One way to manage headaches is to learn to recognize if there are 'triggers', so they can be avoided. Keeping a diary will help by highlighting suspect events, moods or foods. Given that stress is one of the most common triggers for migraines, relaxation such as yoga or meditation may be helpful. (Stress management seminar on 4/27/05).

Medication - Doctors are relatively limited in managing migraines. The medications (Zomig, Imitrex) that are now available that can help minimize the disruption migraine makes to your everyday life are VERY toxic to the Liver and the rest of the body. They are so toxic, that no more than 8 tablets are recommended PER MONTH!

See your chiropractor if - You think you might be suffering from migraine or if you are not satisfied with your current migraine treatment. If you have been suffering from migraine for years, there may now be more effective treatments available.

Tension Headaches

Tension type headache is the most common form of headache with up to two thirds of people experiencing it at some stage in their lives.

Symptoms: Tension headaches are usually felt on both sides of the head. The pain is dull and persistent, varying in intensity. It is often described as a feeling of pressure, heaviness or tightness in a band around the head.

Frequency & Duration: Episodic tension type headaches can last from 30 minutes up to a week. They usually occur infrequently, but can progress to what is known as a **chronic condition**, where headaches occur all the time, with sufferers enduring headaches of varying intensity all day, everyday, and can be woken by them at night.

Generally, tension type headaches are diagnosed as being chronic when they are present for more than 15 days per month. In this case, a sufferer will notice the headache at the start of the day, and it will remain as a dull ache throughout the course of the day, but will usually progress throughout the day.

Possible Causes: Tension type headaches may be triggered by emotional or physical stress (eg: an argument, fatigue, prolonged reading, dehydration or sitting for a long time with bad posture), or by environmental factors such as loud music.

- For every one inch of forward head translation, the muscles supporting the head will work 10 times harder to support the weight of the head (bowling ball example).
- Reversed cervical curves will stretch the spinal cord and place up to 5mm of pressure on the brainstem.
- Upper cervical subluxation can cause compression of the Greater Occipital Nerve between the skull and C1 and cause tension headache symptoms.

Treatment: Lifestyle - Combat stress by keeping fit, getting regular sleep and exercise and eating a balanced diet. Some people find that learning specific relaxation techniques or posture improvement techniques such as yoga or meditation are effective because they teach you to relax your mind and your body, particularly during time of stress.

- A simple x-ray may be able to determine if your posture is the culprit. If the curve in the neck is damaged, or if there is compression of the Greater Occipital Nerve, corrective chiropractic care may be the only permanent solution.

Medication - Episodic tension type headaches are often treated with mild, over-the-counter analgesics such as aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen (Advil), naproxen (Aleve).

- Note that, according to the *New England Journal of Medicine*, there is a lifetime maximum dosage of all of these drugs combined. That is 1 per day for a year, or 1000 tablets in a lifetime. This will increase chances of kidney failure by double within 20 years. Exceed 5000 tablets and it will increase your chances by 800%!
- They are the leading cause of dialysis every year.
- They are the leading cause of liver damage in children (32,000 cases per year)
- They cause 17,000 deaths each year from GI bleeding! (That is the same number as die from AIDS each year).

If the headache continues, you should take a shower or bath, apply a warm compress to your forehead and get some sleep.

If your headaches occur daily and are diagnosed as being chronic tension type headache, get a proper chiropractic checkup! The symptoms you are experiencing are signs of an internal problem, and the drugs will not cure anything.

Some migraine sufferers (about 10%) also sufferer from tension headaches. It is important to keep an accurate record of the exact symptoms and triggers for all your headaches so that your doctor can see if you fall into this category and treat you accordingly. See you chiropractor if:

- your headache lasts more than 24 hours or occur more than three times a week.
- you are woken by headaches, or they are worse in the mornings
- your headache starts when you exercise, strain or cough
- your headache gets progressively worse over several days.

Source: *"NOT ANOTHER HEADACHE"*