



Patient Education

Types of Headaches

by: NeuroCare.AI

What is a Headache?

The term **headache** refers to **a pain in the head**. These symptoms may be localized or may radiate throughout or portions of the head. There are times when headaches are accompanied by neck and shoulder pain.

Headaches can develop gradually or unexpectedly and may last from less than a minute to several days. Most people suffer from headaches at some point in their lives. If severe, they can affect a person's quality of life and diminish their productivity at work and in school. Most headaches can be treated with medications and/or lifestyle changes. If you are experiencing headache symptoms, your healthcare provider is available to evaluate your symptoms and provide you with strategies to relieve them.

A headache is characterized by these characteristics:

- severe pain in the head or neck region
- throbbing/pulsating sensation
- dull discomfort



Headache Key Facts:



75% of Adults experience headaches, mostly **Females**



Pain is **localized anywhere** in the head or neck region.



Often treatable with the use of over-the-counter drugs.



Recurrent headache disorders are associated with significant personal and societal burdens of pain, disability, poor quality of life, and financial costs.

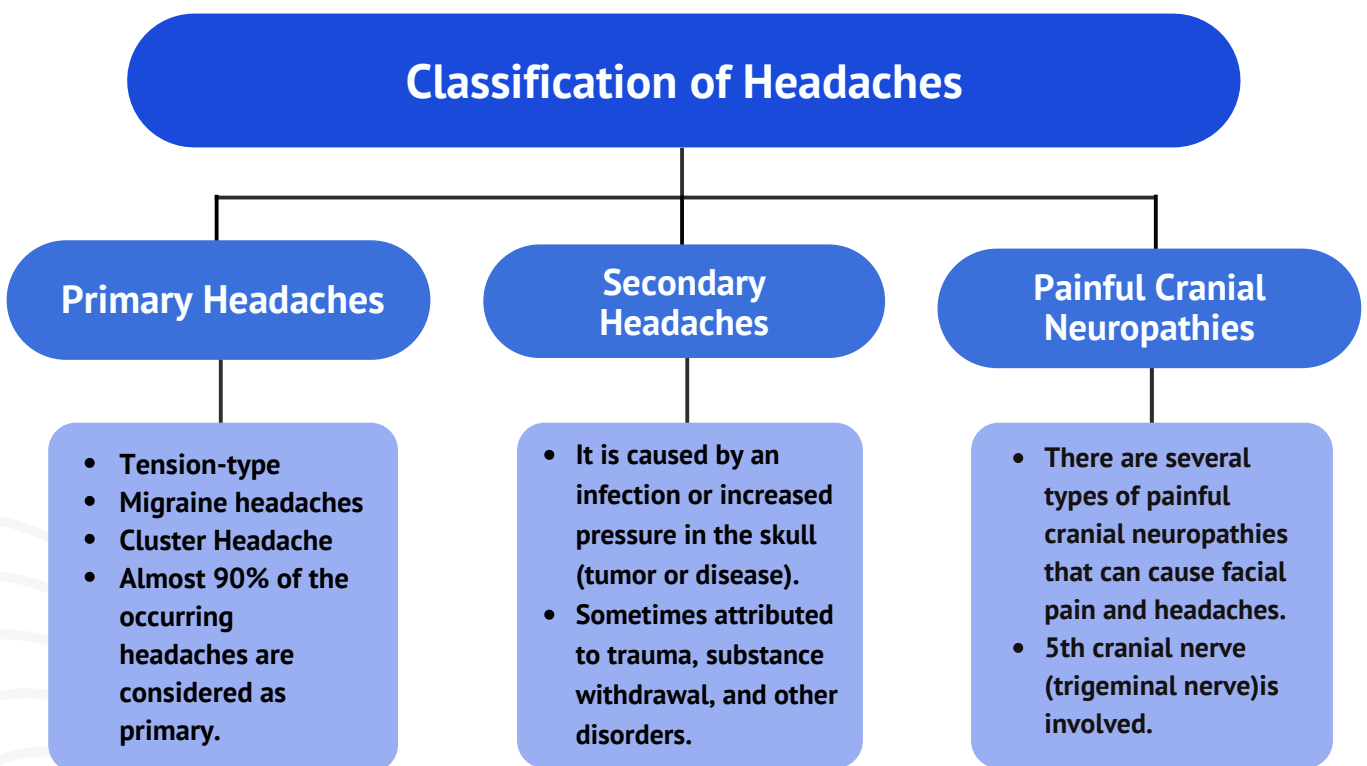


There is a **need to investigate** it thoroughly as, sometimes, it can indicate the beginning of a potentially serious condition.

Classification of Headaches

Primary Headaches vs. Secondary Headaches vs. Painful Cranial Neuropathies

- **Primary Headaches** are not only limited to tension-type, trigeminal autonomic cephalgia, and migraine headaches but almost 90% of the occurring headaches are considered primary.
- **Secondary Headaches** are caused by another medical problem like an infection or increased pressure in the skull caused by a tumor or disease. It accounts for fewer than 10% of all headaches. These are sometimes attributed to trauma to the head and neck, cranial and cervical valvular disease, a substance withdrawal, disorder to the homeostasis, or disorder to the facial and cervical structures (eyes, neck, nose, sinuses, teeth, cranium, mouth), and psychiatric disorder.
- **Painful Cranial Neuropathies.** The cranial nerve can be related to several different types of painful facial and headache disorders. Current research indicates that the fifth cranial nerve, also known as the trigeminal nerve, underlies many of the known headache and facial pain conditions.



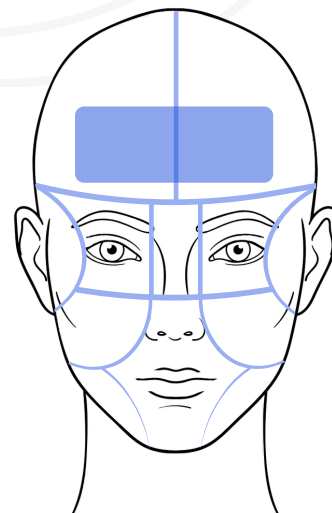
What are the Different Types of Primary Headaches?

Headache is among the most common disorders of the nervous system. The two most common types of headaches are tension headaches, migraine headaches, and chronic headaches. In terms of symptoms and treatment, tension headaches and migraine headaches are frequently interchangeable. Relief methods and triggering factors can differ from person to person.

Tension-type Headache

A tension-type headache (TTH) is characterized by mild to moderate discomfort that is typically described as feeling like a tight band around. The **most frequent and most common type of headache is a tension headache**, although its causes are unknown.

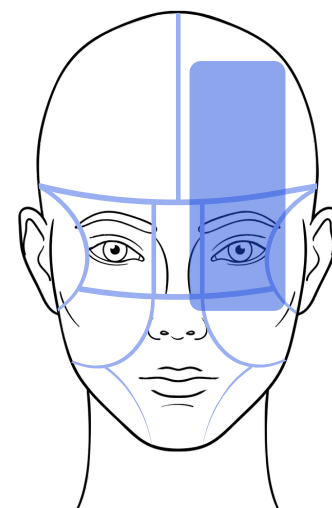
Tension headaches **tend to occur in conjunction with stress, fatigue, or muscle strain**. Tension headaches can be triggered by activities that place the head and neck in a tense, prolonged position (e.g. reading, keyboarding, chewing gum, or grinding teeth).



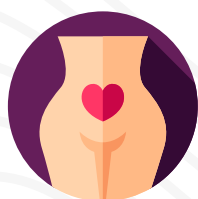
Migraine Headache

A migraine headache is less common than tension-type headaches and **causes more disability, lost workdays, and loss of revenue**. There are between 25-30 million migraine sufferers in the United States.

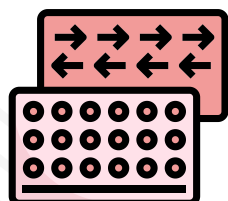
- 3 out of 4 are FEMALES.
- 12% of the population suffer from migraine headaches at some point in their lives.



Migraine headaches due to hormonal changes in Women:



Menstruation



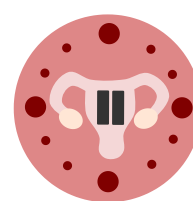
Oral Contraceptives



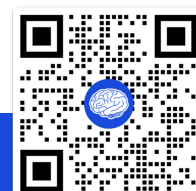
Pregnancy



Post-partum

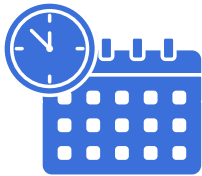
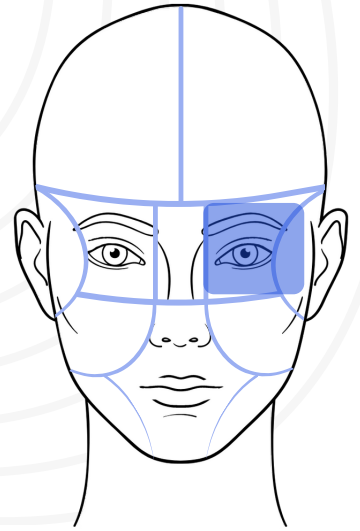


Menopause



Cluster-type Headache

One of the **most excruciating** types of headache is a cluster headache. This type of headache occurs in cyclical patterns or clusters. Typically, cluster headaches wake you up in the middle of the night with tremendous pain around one of your eyes. Sometimes, headache clusters are followed by remission periods in which headaches cease. For months or even years after remission, there are no headaches. Fortunately, cluster headaches are rare and not fatal. Cluster headache attacks can be reduced in intensity and duration with treatment. In addition, drugs can reduce the frequency of cluster headache attacks.



Attacks can last between **15 minutes and 3 hours**, and occur once every other day to eight times a day.

- ✓ Episodic basis
- ✓ Attacks occurred daily for a few weeks to a few months,
- ✓ followed by a few months to a few years between attacks.



Almost always triggered by too much **Alcohol intake**.



Young men are more likely to experience cluster headaches.

Headache Triggers



Strong surge of stress emotion



Sleep deprivation/oversleeping



Bright, Flashing lights



Eye strain



Low blood sugar



Caffeine



Changes in weather



Food triggers such as peanuts, MSG, aspartame



Pharmacological Treatment for Headaches

Treatment for headaches is divided into two medication regimens:

1. **Abortive Medications.** Studies have been conducted on anti-inflammatory drugs and simple analgesics for treating headaches, using headache attacks as models for acute pain. According to the International Headache Society, NSAIDs are the first-line drugs used in headache research.
2. **Prophylactic medications.** It is possible to require daily prophylaxis medication for chronic headache sufferers. The choice and necessity of prophylaxis medication should always be discussed with your physician.

Non-Pharmacological Treatment for Headaches

Drinking extra water is a good place to start. You may be dehydrated and need to drink more water. You should also examine **how much sleep you get**. Sleep deprivation can result in tension headaches, so get plenty of rest. Also, **don't skip any meals** because hunger might cause headaches.

Your doctor can also recommend the following ways to keep you going:

- **Stress management classes** for stress coping techniques.
- **Biofeedback.** A special type of stress management technique.
- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).** A type of talk therapy that enables you to sort out your emotions and eventually identify that one experience that causes the triggers.
- **Acupuncture.** An alternative way to release stress through the use of fine needles to a specific part of the body.

You can also apply these alternative ways to ease your tension headache:

- Apply a heating or ice pad to your head for 10-15 minutes.
- Taking a hot or cold shower can also ease the headache.
- Take in between breaks to prevent eye strain and improve your posture.



Prevention

As headaches are frequently induced by specific triggers, understanding the variables that cause your headaches is one method of preventing future occurrences.

You can keep a **headache diary journal** with you to help you figure out what triggers your tension headache. You can record your daily intake of nutrients (meals), daily physical activities, and anything life situation that triggers stress. Make a note of every day when you get a tension headache. You might be able to connect after a few weeks or months. For example, if your journal reveals that you had headaches on days when you ate a specific food, that food could be your trigger.

You may be able to prevent cluster headaches by avoiding the following:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Cocaine
- High altitudes
- Strenuous activities
- Hot weather
- Hot baths
- Foods that contain large amounts of nitrates, such as bacon, hot dogs, preserved meats



When to See a Doctor

Consult your doctor if tension-type headaches are **interfering with your life** or if you need to take headache medicine **more than twice a week**.

Always consult your doctor if the **pattern changes** or your headaches feel **different than usual**. Headaches can occasionally signify a dangerous medical problem, such as a brain tumor or the rupture of a weakened blood artery or aneurysm.

Should any of the following change suddenly or worsen, seek **emergency treatment** as soon as possible:

- high fever
- headache accompanied with a fever, stiff neck, lightheadedness, sudden seizures due to high-temperature fever, blurry or double vision, weakness and numbness, and/or mumbling/speaking difficulties
- headache worsens after a traumatic head injury

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