

WHAT TYPES OF HEADACHES CAN CHILDREN HAVE?

Migraines and tension headaches are common types of headaches in children. These headaches have different symptoms, but they can sometimes be hard to tell apart.

It's important to find out what kind of headache your child has, since the medicines and other treatments may be different. Different things can trigger each kind of headache in different people. Talk to your child's doctor about any headaches your child has.

What causes headaches in children?

It isn't clear why some people get migraine headaches and others do not. Migraines often run in families. Experts aren't sure what causes migraines.

The cause of tension headaches also isn't clear. Experts believe there may be more than one cause. In the past, doctors believed that tension or spasms of the muscles of the neck, face, jaw, head, or scalp played a role. Now they think a change in brain chemistry may also cause a tension headache.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of migraine headaches include:

- Throbbing that can be felt on one side or both sides of the head. The pain also can move from one side of the head to the other.
- Nausea, vomiting, or both.
- Sensitivity to light, noise, and sometimes smells.



- Changes in vision, such as flashing lights or dark spots, before the headache starts. This symptom, called aura, is more common in adults than in children.

Symptoms of tension headaches include:

- A constant ache that does not throb or pulse. Your child will probably feel pain or pressure on both sides of the head.
- Tightness around the head or forehead.
- Aching pain at the temples or the back of the head and neck.

What other signs of headaches should you watch for?

Some children, especially younger ones, may not always tell you when they feel a headache. So watch for other signs. A headache may cause your child to:

- Act cranky or upset.
- Fall asleep at an unusual time or act sleepy.
- Be less active than usual or not watch TV.
- Rub his or her eyes or head.
- Avoid noise or bright light.

If you notice any signs, find out how your child is feeling. Talk with your child about letting you and other caregivers know as soon as a headache starts.

How are children's headaches diagnosed?

Your child's doctor will do a physical examination and ask questions, such as how often the headaches occur and what the symptoms are. The doctor will also ask about your child's overall health.



The doctor can rule out other health problems that may be related to the headaches. Other examinations and tests are usually recommended only if the doctor finds signs of other health problems.

Headaches aren't usually a sign of something serious. But they can be painful and hard for your child to live with.

How are they treated?

Migraines and tension headaches can be treated with over-the-counter pain relievers, such as children's acetaminophen or ibuprofen. If this doesn't help stop your child's headaches, or if the headaches happen often, your doctor may prescribe other medicines.

Home treatment, such as managing stress, can also help your child feel better. Your child can help prevent headaches by avoiding things that trigger them.