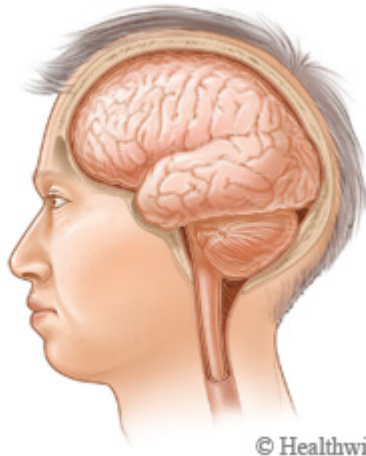


Headache: Care Instructions



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Your Care Instructions

Headaches have many possible causes. Most headaches aren't a sign of a more serious problem, and they will get better on their own. Home treatment may help you feel better faster.

The doctor has checked you carefully, but problems can develop later. If you notice any problems or new symptoms, **get medical treatment right away**.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Do not drive if you have taken a prescription pain medicine.
- Rest in a quiet, dark room until your headache is gone. Close your eyes and try to relax or go to sleep. Don't watch TV or read.
- Put a cold, moist cloth or cold pack on the painful area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Put a thin cloth between the cold pack and your skin.
- Use a warm, moist towel or a heating pad set on low to relax tight shoulder and neck muscles.
- Have someone gently massage your neck and shoulders.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- Be careful not to take pain medicine more often than the instructions allow, because you may get worse or more frequent headaches when the medicine wears off.

- Do not ignore new symptoms that occur with a headache, such as a fever, weakness or numbness, vision changes, or confusion. These may be signs of a more serious problem.

To prevent headaches

- Keep a headache diary so you can figure out what triggers your headaches. Avoiding triggers may help you prevent headaches. Record when each headache began, how long it lasted, and what the pain was like (throbbing, aching, stabbing, or dull). Write down any other symptoms you had with the headache, such as nausea, flashing lights or dark spots, or sensitivity to bright light or loud noise. Note if the headache occurred near your period. List anything that might have triggered the headache, such as certain foods (chocolate, cheese, wine) or odors, smoke, bright light, stress, or lack of sleep.
- Find healthy ways to deal with stress. Headaches are most common during or right after stressful times. Take time to relax before and after you do something that has caused a headache in the past.
- Try to keep your muscles relaxed by keeping good posture. Check your jaw, face, neck, and shoulder muscles for tension, and try relaxing them. When sitting at a desk, change positions often, and stretch for 30 seconds each hour.
- Get plenty of sleep and exercise.
- Eat regularly and well. Long periods without food can trigger a headache.
- Treat yourself to a massage. Some people find that regular massages are very helpful in relieving tension.
- Limit caffeine by not drinking too much coffee, tea, or soda. But don't quit caffeine suddenly, because that can also give you headaches.
- Reduce eyestrain from computers by blinking frequently and looking away from the computer screen every so often. Make sure you have proper eyewear and that your monitor is set up properly, about an arm's length away.
- Seek help if you have depression or anxiety. Your headaches may be linked to these conditions. Treatment can both prevent headaches and help with symptoms of anxiety or depression.

When should you call for help?



Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You have signs of a stroke. These may include:
 - Sudden numbness, paralysis, or weakness in your face, arm, or leg, especially on only one side of your body.
 - Sudden vision changes.
 - Sudden trouble speaking.
 - Sudden confusion or trouble understanding simple statements.
 - Sudden problems with walking or balance.
 - A sudden, severe headache that is different from past headaches.

Call your doctor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have a new or worse headache.
- Your headache gets much worse.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **M271** in the search box to learn more about "**Headache: Care Instructions**".

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