

## Treatment

Treatment for headaches depends on the type.

One of the critical pieces to treating primary headaches is figuring out your triggers. Determining what those are can reduce the number of headaches you have. Usually, this can be done by keeping a headache log.

Once your triggers are identified, your healthcare provider can tailor treatment to accommodate your needs.

### Example

If you get headaches when you are tense or worried, counseling and stress management techniques can help handle this trigger better. Lowering your stress level, can avoid stress-induced headaches.

Not every headache requires medication. Depending on your headache type, frequency and cause, treatment options include:

- Stress management.
- Biofeedback.
- Medications.
- Treating the underlying medical condition/cause.



## Headache Diary

Keeping a detailed record of your headaches can assist with providing additional awareness about your triggers and how to avoid them.

The National Headache Foundation recommends keeping a headache diary to track the characteristics of your headaches. Patterns identified from your diary can assist your physician in determining which type of headache you have and the most beneficial treatment.

## References:

*Headache diary: Keeping A diary can help your doctor help you.*  
National Headache Foundation. (n.d.). Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://headaches.org/resources/headache-diary-keeping-a-diary-can-help-your-doctor-help-you/>

*Headache when to see a doctor - mayo clinic.* (n.d.). Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/headache/basics/when-to-see-doctor/sym-20050800>

*Headache: What it is, types, causes, symptoms & treatment.*  
Cleveland Clinic. (n.d.). Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9639-headaches#:~:text=A%>

This brochure is intended to promote healthy habits. It is not intended as a substitute for medical advice or professional care. Before making changes to your diet or exercise, consult your health care provider.



# HEADACHES

Causes, Types & Treatments





## Headaches

Headache is pain in any section of the head or face. They can appear on one or both sides of the head, be isolated to a specific spot, or spread across the head from one point. The pain is often explained as a pressure that is throbbing, constant, sharp, or dull. They can differ significantly in regard to pain type, severity, location, and frequency. Headaches can develop gradually or suddenly and may last from less than an hour to several days.

This condition is very common that most people will experience many times during their lives. It is the most common type of pain and is commonly named for days missed at work or school, and visits to healthcare providers.

While most headaches are not dangerous, some types can be a signal of a more serious condition.

## Causes

Headache pain results from signals interacting among your brain, blood vessels and surrounding nerves. During a headache, various mechanisms trigger specific nerves that affect muscles and blood vessels. These nerves send pain signals to your brain, causing a headache.

## What are the Types of Headaches?

Though there are more than 150 types of headaches, they fall into two main categories: primary and secondary headaches.

### Primary Headaches

Over-activity of pain-sensitive features in your head cause primary headaches. Chemical activity in your brain, nerves or blood vessels surrounding your skull, or the muscles of your head and neck can contribute to primary headaches. They are not a symptom or caused by an underlying medical condition. Some individuals may have genes that causes them to be more susceptible to a primary headache.

Types of primary headaches include:

- Tension-type headaches (most common type of headache).
- Migraine headaches.
- Migraine with aura.
- Cluster headaches.
- New daily persistent headaches (NDPH).

There are a few headache patterns that are not as common that may be considered a primary headache. These headaches have definite features, such as an unusual length or pain linked with a certain activity.

Each of these headaches could be a symptom of an underlying disease.

They include:

- Chronic daily headaches (chronic migraine, chronic tension-type headache, or hemicranias continua).
- Cough headaches.
- Exercise headaches.
- Sex headaches.



Some primary headaches can be triggered by lifestyle factors or situations, including:

- Alcohol, particularly red wine.
- Certain foods, such as processed meats that contain nitrates.
- Consuming nicotine.
- Changes in sleep or lack of sleep.
- Poor posture.
- Physical activity, such as exercise.
- Skipped meals.
- Coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose, straining (such as when having a bowel movement), or laughing or crying strongly.
- Stress.

### Secondary Headaches

A secondary headache is a symptom of an underlying medical condition that can activate the pain-sensitive nerves of the head. A variety of conditions may cause secondary headaches.

Types of secondary headaches that are not necessarily dangerous and resolve once the underlying condition is treated include:

- Dehydration headache.
- Sinus headaches.
- Medication overuse headaches.
- Spinal headaches.
- Thunderclap headaches.

Possible causes of secondary headaches include:

- Nasal and sinus infection.
- Blood clot.
- Brain aneurysm.
- Brain tumor.
- Carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Concussion.
- Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- Dental problems.
- Ear infection.
- Glaucoma.
- Hangovers.
- High blood pressure (hypertension).
- Influenza (flu).
- Panic attacks and panic disorder.
- Stroke.