

If you suffer with frequent Headaches.....

When you suffer with headaches, the best place to start your search for a cause, is with a complete vision examination. In fact, most physicians will suggest an eye examination, before beginning medical tests, to find the cause of your headaches. Certain vision problems and eye diseases can give rise to headaches. However, the unfortunate fact is that most headaches are not caused by visual disturbances.

If an eye examination determines that your eyes are not to blame for your headaches, you should consult with your medical physician to find the cause. Headaches can be a warning sign of a more serious condition.

This paper will discuss headaches that are the result of visual conditions, as well as the three most common causes of headaches: Tension Headaches, Migraine Headaches, and Cluster Headaches.

Ocular Headaches

What is the cause of an Ocular Headache ?

Visual conditions that cause headaches include: hyperopia (far-sighted), astigmatism, large vision differences between the two eyes, an eye muscle imbalance, focusing difficulties, and sometimes even myopia (near-sighted) if the patient constantly squints to see better.

Serious eye conditions that can cause a headache are rare. They include: inflammation of the internal structures of the eye, irritations of the cornea, optic neuritis, ocular tumors, and one type of glaucoma, called acute closed angle glaucoma.

What is the treatment for an Ocular Headache ?

A headache that is truly caused by eyestrain or vision problems will be relieved with glasses, contact lenses, and/or exercises for your eyes.

When a serious eye disease is the cause of a headache, medical attention will be necessary to treat the illness that is causing the pain.

Are there other types of headaches which can appear to be an Ocular Headache ?

Many times, what is thought of as an ocular headache is actually a muscle tension headache. A muscle tension headache can occur because of poor posture while reading or doing other near point tasks. Poor posture places strain on the neck and back muscles, which can trigger a headache. Also, muscle tension around the eyes, after excessive reading without occasional rest breaks, can cause a headache.

Students who experience visual headaches while in school may be having a vascular headache, due to low blood sugar levels. Or they may be having anxiety-tension headaches, due to school work demands. The symptoms of either of these headaches include: pain around the eyes, pulling sensations, sensitivity to light, and the need to blink and force the eyes to focus. Treatment for this type of headache will involve providing a well-balanced breakfast and lunch, or encouragement over tests and other assignments.

Tension Headaches

What is the cause of a Tension Headache ?


Stress, anxiety, as well as many other factors, may provoke a tension headache. Newer research is showing that a tension headache may actually be a form of a migraine headache. Studies indicate that there may be a type of "biological tendency" in certain people to cause them to have a tension headache. Migraine headaches also show a strong genetic influence.

What are the symptoms of a Tension Headache ?

Someone suffering from a tension headache will describe a pain that is steady, not throbbing, and mild or moderately painful. Usually the pain is located in the back of the head. The pain may feel as though something is squeezing the head. A tension headache may last for hours, or even days before subsiding.

What is the treatment for a Tension Headache ?

Treatment methods for a tension headache include: stress reduction, massages of the scalp, neck, or back muscles to relieve tension, biofeedback training to teach the brain to relax, and occasionally, medication to reduce the frequency or severity of the headache.

 ***Keep a daily journal of all foods and medications that you take. Also, record the days events, or circumstances to monitor emotional factors which may trigger a headache. Look for patterns or similarities in the time periods before each headache.***

Migraine Headaches

What is the cause of a Migraine Headache?

No one knows what actually causes a migraine headache, but there are several factors which may contribute to start a migraine headache. Changes in barometric pressure, air travel, hormonal fluctuations, and certain foods can all trigger a migraine headache. In fact, studies show that foods are a major factor in provoking headaches in about 25% of all the migraine headache cases.

Who is likely to suffer with a Migraine Headaches?

Roughly 10% of the American population gets migraine headaches. The typical adult migraine headache patient is female. However, migraine headache patients are not always adults. The headaches can begin as young as 4 years of age.

This type of headache appears to have a strong genetic influence. Most migraine headache patients have a close relative who also suffers with migraine headaches.

What are the symptoms of a Migraine Headache?

The typical migraine headache lasts from four to seventy-two hours. The pain is located on one side of the head, although the pain may switch from side to side during the headache. Usually, the pain is so severe that the patient is unable to do anything except lie down. Other symptoms include: vomiting, loss of appetite, nausea, and an aversion to bright lights and loud noises.

What is the treatment for a Migraine Headache?

Treatment of a migraine headache depends on the nature, severity, and frequency of the headaches. Your physician will determine a treatment plan to eliminate or lessen your migraine headaches, based on the specific characteristics of your headaches.

One note of caution: Using either over the counter, or prescription, pain killers more than two days per week can actually worsen migraine headaches!



Foods to avoid if you suffer with Migraine Headaches

- *alcohol especially red wines*
- *beans*
- *aged, ripened cheese*
- *coffee and/or tea*
- *chocolates*
- *cured meats*
- *figs*
- *fermented foods*
- *excessive citrus fruit drinks*
- *colas and caffienated soft drinks*
- *garlic*
- *marinated foods*
- *olives*
- *onions*
- *pickled foods*
- *pizza*
- *pork*
- *excessive salty foods such as chips and nuts*
- *foods that contain monosodium glutamate*

Cluster Headaches

What is the cause of a Cluster Headache?

The exact cause of cluster headaches is unknown. What is known is that cluster headaches affect men far more often than women. Also, the condition is often misdiagnosed as a sinus headache, because of similar symptoms.

What are the symptoms of a Cluster Headache?

The pain of a cluster headache is described as intense, steady or stabbing, around the eye and/or towards one side of the head. A stuffy nose and nasal discharge, similar to a sinus headache, is common with cluster headaches.

The pain usually last from 30 to 90 minutes at a time, and can occur up to 10 times per day. The pain can reoccur every day for weeks, or even months. Most commonly, the pain begins while sleeping, often about one to two hours after retiring for the night.

What is the treatment for a Cluster Headache?

Cluster headaches last for a relatively short time, so medication to ease the pain will not work fast enough to be of help. Normal treatment involves medication to prevent cluster headaches from occurring.

A final word about Headaches

For many years, headache sufferers have been told that the pain is all psychological. They have had to live with the accusation that the pain is "all in their heads". However, research has proven that headaches are not psychological at all. The pain during a headache is real.. So don't ignore the pain, or hope that the headaches will just "go away." Determine the cause, and get the appropriate treatment, for your headaches.