



Wellness Buddy Tip

Providing guidance and support to make the "healthy choice the easy choice."

Chronic Disease Health Promotion and Education Program
Jackson County Health Department

National Headache Awareness Week June 6-12

According to the National Headache Foundation migraine begins as a dull ache and then develops into a constant throbbing and pulsating pain that you may feel at the temples, as well as the front or back of one or both sides of the head. The pain is usually accompanied by a combination of nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light and noise. Some people (about 15% of migraine sufferers) experience an aura before an attack. The cause of migraine is believed to be chemical reactions in the brain. Treatment for migraine may include over-the-counter or prescription medications, as well as self-help techniques such as relaxation training and biofeedback.

Migraine characteristics can include:

- Pain typically on one side of the head
- Pain has a pulsating or throbbing quality
- Moderate to intense pain affecting daily activities
- Nausea or vomiting
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Attacks last four to 72 hours, sometimes longer
- Visual disturbances or aura
- Exertion such as climbing stairs makes headache worse

Trigger factors contributing to the occurrence of migraine attacks include diet, sleep, activity, and psychological issues. Hormonal changes, weather (bright sun-



Headaches are divided into 2 basic categories: primary/benign (tension-type, migraine, cluster) and secondary (organically caused).

shine, hot, humid conditions, and barometric pressure), and stress can also lead to or "trigger" a migraine. It's important to remember that triggers are different for everyone.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved three over-the-counter products to treat migraines. Excedrin® Migraine (a combination of aspirin, acetaminophen and caffeine), Advil® Migraine and Motrin® Migraine Pain.

Sometimes a headache or uncharacteristic migraine symptoms warrant medical attention. Call your doctor or go to an Emergency Department if you fit the following criteria:

- You have more than the occasional headache
- Your headaches are more severe or come on quickly
- Your headache is accompanied by any of the following (and you have not discussed these symptoms

- with your doctor before)
- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Fever
- Numbness
- Persistent vomiting
- Shortness of breath
- Slurred speech
- Stiff neck
- Unpredicted symptoms affecting your ears, nose, throat or eyes
- Unrelenting diarrhea
- Vision loss
- Weakness
- You have a headache that persists, and continues to get worse or won't stop
- Your headaches interfere with your normal activities of daily life
- You find yourself taking pain relievers more than two days a week
- You take over-the-counter medications for headache relief but the recommended dosage is not adequate
- Coughing, sneezing, bending over, exercise or sexual activity causes headaches
- You have headaches that continue and that began after a head injury, or other trauma
- The characteristics of your headaches change
- The symptoms of your migraine attacks change

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Special points of interest:

- Many individuals fear they are having a stroke due to the severity of a migraine attack. The likelihood of a migraine attack causing a stroke is very remote.
- Examples of alternative therapies used to treat migraines include acupuncture, acupressure, yoga, and herbal therapy.
- Cluster headaches are characterized little, if any, warning, usually on one side of the head, tearing or blood shot eye and runny nose on the side of the headache. Described as the most severe and intense of any headache type.



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