

# Headaches

*Headache pain is not all created equal. It comes in different varieties and for different reasons, all of which become important when deciding on the appropriate course of treatment.*

## Migraine Headaches

Those suffering from migraine headaches can usually be found curled up in the fetal position in a dark, quiet room. This type of headache usually throbs on one side of the head (although it can strike both sides) and usually causes significant pain. Migraines may or may not be preceded by certain warning signs (called aura) such as flickering lights or black spots in their vision, or numbness on one side of the face or hand. Migraine headaches are due to changes in brain chemistry, producing neurological and physical symptoms. Reactions to migraine headache pain can include nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light, sound and movement. They can be brought on by stress, hormonal changes, or particular foods. When left untreated, they typically last from 4 – 72 hours. The frequency of these headaches varies from person to person. They are more often seen in women in their child-bearing years.



Talk to your doctor about certain medications that can provide relief to migraine headaches or to prevent them from occurring. In addition, you can try the following lifestyle and home remedies:

- Muscle relaxation exercises – spend a half hour a day doing something relaxing, such as listening to music, taking a hot bath, reading, meditation or yoga
- Rest and relax when you feel a headache coming on – place an icepack wrapped in a cloth on the back of your neck and apply gentle pressure to painful areas on your head
- Keep a headache diary – this will help you to identify what triggers your migraines and which treatment is most effective

## Tension-Type Headaches

Tension-type is the most common type of headache, found in over 75% of headaches. They are described as a tight, non-pulsating, pressing or squeezing band-like pain on both sides of the head, sort of like a “tight-hat” sensation. It is caused by muscles tightening in the head and neck, which causes the blood vessels in the head to expand. Almost everyone occasionally suffers from this type of headache. The next time you feel a tension headache coming on, try giving your head a gentle massage to relax the muscles and reduce your stress levels.

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## Cluster Headache

Of all the headache types, cluster headaches are arguably the most menacing. Almost exclusively affecting males, cluster headaches come and go in short bouts of severe pain on one side of the head. Symptoms such as a teary eye or drooped eyelid on the affected side or a runny nose are common side-effects. A number of medications can be used to successfully treat cluster headaches.

## Sinus Headache

Sinus headaches are caused by swelling, irritation and possibly an infection of the sinuses, which are air-filled cavities connected to the nose. This type of headache can easily be mistaken with migraine and tension headache pain. Drinking plenty of water will help to thin the mucus and relieve your sinus headache. You can also try steam from a hot shower or bath, a humidifier or boiling water on the stove with peppermint or eucalyptus leaves to clear the sinuses and provide relief.

See your doctor immediately or go the emergency room if you experience any of the following signs or symptoms, which may indicate a more serious medical problem:

- An abrupt, severe headache like a thunderclap
- Headache with fever, stiff neck, rash, mental confusion, seizures, double vision, weakness, numbness or trouble speaking
- Headache after a head injury, especially if the headache is getting worse
- A chronic headache that is worse after coughing, exertion, straining, or a sudden movement
- New headache pain if you are older than 50

Sources: [http://www.headachepainreliefcentre.ca/headaches\\_mirgaines.htm](http://www.headachepainreliefcentre.ca/headaches_mirgaines.htm)

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/migraine-headache/DS00120/DSECTION=symptoms>

<http://www.headache-help.org/headaches-migraines-tension-cluster-sinus-pts-rare>

<http://sinusheadaches.ca/>