

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS IN CHILDHOOD HEADACHE



### **Headache is a problem of adults.... Can children get headaches?**

By the time children reach high school, most young people have experienced some type of headache. However, once your child's physician discovers the cause and type of the headache, many safe and effective approaches or medications can prevent a headache from occurring or stop it after it has started

### **What are the different types of headache?**

Headaches are generally classified as primary (ie headache itself is a disease) and secondary to other illness and represent one of the symptom of other illness.

The common types of primary headaches are migraine and tension type headache. Secondary headaches are associated with an infectious illness or are related to an injury.

### **What Causes Headaches in Children and Teens?**

Most kids get them because of an illness, infection (like a cold), or a fever. For example, sinusitis (inflammation of the sinuses) and infections of the throat or ear can trigger headaches. Refractory errors are another common causes of headache in children.

Some children also have headache due to migraine.

### **Is my headache migraine?**

Migraine is the most common form of headache, but not all headaches are migraines. The term "migraine" refers to a headache which is usually (but not always) on one side of the head. It is a headache that lasts from two to seventy-two hours, typically, and it is often associated with nausea and/or vomiting, sensitivity to light and/or sound. The character of the pain is typically a throbbing pain.

Symptoms of migraine may vary with age.

Migraine can also be part of a mixed headache pattern in which the patient has more than one type of headache (e.g. Migraine + Tension-type). It is important to know what type of headache you have because management varies greatly for different headache types.

### **What is the difference between a headache and a migraine?**

It is not always easy to distinguish between the two, as there may be an element of both muscle tension and a vascular component in both headaches and migraine. In many cases, migraine headaches are severe and are often accompanied by visual disturbances or nausea. Normal headaches will often respond to over-the-counter medications, whereas migraine is often severe enough to require prescription medication.

### **Are migraines hereditary?**

In most cases, the short answer is yes. It is very unusual to find migraine headaches in someone without any family history of migraine. There is a group of people who develop migraine-like headaches after significant head trauma, and they may or may not have a family history.

### **What is a migraine trigger?**

A migraine trigger is anything that consistently results in a headache. Common triggers include, alcohol, lack of sleep, and skipped meals. Many people have food triggers and smell triggers. But everyone is different.

### **What is a tension-type headache? What causes it, and how can I treat it?**

Tension-type headaches occur randomly and are often the result of temporary stress, anxiety, fatigue, or anger. Symptoms include soreness in your temples, a tightening band-like sensation around your head, a pulling feeling, pressure sensations, and contracting head and neck muscles. The headache begins in your forehead, temples, or the back of your head and neck. Treatment for tension-type headache may include over-the-counter or prescription medications, as well as self-help techniques such as relaxation training and biofeedback.

### **Does a headache mean I have a brain tumour?**

People often assume that a recurring headache is an indication of something sinister like a brain tumour or impending stroke but no matter what type of headache you have, it's usually not caused by any life-threatening condition

### **Do I need a brain scan for my headache?**

Brain scan (CT/MRI) is usually not required in majority of cases unless you have red flag signs. Your doctor will advise you whether you need a brain scan or not after clinical assessment.

### **What are the red flag signs?**

Most headaches are harmless. However if a child has one or more of the following, he or she should be evaluated by a health care provider before any treatment is given

- If the headache occurs after head injury
- If the headache awakens the child or occurs upon waking
- If the pain is severe or there are associated symptoms such as vomiting, blurring of vision, unsteadiness, neck pain, confusion and/or fever
- Intense abrupt onset “thunderclap like pain”, “pain unlike anything ever before”
- Headache which increases with coughing, sneezing or straining