

Kids Get Headaches Too!

Many children suffer from headaches, just like their parents! Most headaches in children are not serious medical conditions. However, they can cause many days lost from school or play.

Aren't headaches just headaches?

Allergies, fumes, food, chemicals, eyestrain, low blood sugar, changes in the weather or family history can trigger headaches. Headaches can also result from serious conditions, such as a head injury or concussion, blood vessel problems, medication side effects, infections, sinus problems, or tumors.

Consult your family doctor if your child's headaches are frequent, severe or include unusual symptoms. Worrisome symptoms that should be brought to your doctor's attention include:

- ◆ Headaches that wake a child from sleep
- ◆ Early morning vomiting without nausea (upset stomach)
- ◆ Worsening or more frequent headaches
- ◆ Personality changes
- ◆ Complaints that "this is the worst headache I've ever had!"
- ◆ The headache is different than previous headaches
- ◆ Headaches with fever or stiff neck
- ◆ Headaches that follow an injury

What do I do if my child gets a headache?

- ◆ Record your child's headaches. Write down everything that might relate to your child's headache (foods, odors, situations), how long it lasted, and how much pain the headache caused.
- ◆ Your child needs to be able to treat his/her headaches at school. Notify your child's school about the problem. It is important that you discuss this with your child's doctor, so that all of the forms and permissions are completed for treating your child's headaches at school without having to go home.
- ◆ Drinking more fluids (especially sports drinks) during a headache may help it go away faster.

What can I do to prevent my child's headaches?

- ◆ Make sure your child drinks 4 to 8 glasses of fluid a day. Caffeine should be avoided. Sports drinks may also help during a headache as well as during exercise by keeping sugar and sodium levels normal.
- ◆ Make sure your child gets plenty of regular sleep at night (but don't let him/her oversleep). Fatigue and overexertion are two factors that can trigger headaches. Most children and adolescents need to sleep 8 to 10 hours each night and keep a regular sleep schedule to help prevent headaches.
- ◆ Be sure that your child eats balanced meals at regular hours. Do not let him/her skip meals.
- ◆ Avoid foods that seem to trigger headaches. Remember that every child is different, so your child's triggers may be different from another child's.
- ◆ Plan and schedule your child's activities sensibly. Try to avoid overcrowded schedules or stressful situations.

Source: *American Council for Headache Education, January 2003*

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