

HEALTH EDUCATION ON HEADACHES

A headache is a pain in your head or face. The pain can be throbbing, constant, sharp or dull.

What causes headaches?

Headache results from signals interacting among the brain, blood vessels and surrounding nerves. During a headache, an unknown mechanism activates specific nerves that affect muscles and blood vessels. These nerves send pain signals to the brain.

Types of headaches:

1. **Primary headaches:** those that are not due to another medical condition. These includes:
 - Cluster headache – most severe type of primary headache occurring one to eight times in a day in a cluster period which may last two weeks to three months. the pain of cluster headache is located behind or in one eye region without changing sides and throbbing or constant
 - Migraines – symptoms include;
 - moderate to severe pain.
 - nausea and vomiting.
 - Pounding or throbbing pain.
 - pain that lasts four hours to three days.
 - sensitivity to light, noise or odor.
 - Stomach upsets or abdominal pains.
 - Tension headaches: most common type of headache. Pain tends to be;
 - Consistent without throbbing
 - Mild to moderate
 - On both sides of the head

- Responsive to over the counter treatment
- Worse during routine activities like walking or bending
- New daily persistent headache: come on suddenly and lasts for more than three months. Pains tends to be;
 - Constant and persistent without ceasing up.
 - Located both sides of the head.
 - Not responsive to medications

2.Secondary headaches are related to other medical conditions such as:

- Disease of blood vessels in the brain
- Head injury
- High blood pressure
- Infection
- Medication over use
- Sinus congestion
- Trauma
- Tumor

Sinus headaches

This is as a result of sinus infection which causes congestion and inflammation of the sinuses. The symptoms include;

- Bad taste in the mouth
- Deep constant pain in your cheekbones and forehead
- Facial swelling
- Feeling of fullness in the ears
- Fever
- Pain that gets worse with sudden head movement or straining.
- Nasal mucus discharge

What headache symptoms require immediate medical care?

- A sudden new severe headache
- Headache associated with neurological symptoms like; dizziness, weakness, paralysis, seizures, mental confusion, loss of balance, numbness, vision changes, changes in speech
- Headache with fever, shortness of breath, stiff neck or rash.
- Headache -pain that awakens you at night.
- Headache with severe nausea and vomiting.
- Headache that occur after head injury or accident.
- Getting a new type of headache after age 55.

Headache remedies

You can treat occasional mild headache at home with over the counter pain relievers. Other self- care treatments for headache include;

- Applying heat or cold packs to your head.
- Doing stretching exercises.
- Massaging your head, neck or back.
- Resting in a dark and quiet room.
- Taking a walk.
- Ensure to get adequate sleep and rest
- Drink plenty of water

How to prevent headaches

The key to preventing headaches is figuring out what triggers them. Once you determine your triggers, you can try to avoid or minimize them. e.g. If strong scents set you off, avoid perfumes and scented products. Other common triggers include troublesome foods, lack of sleep, poor posture, bright light.