

# What is a Headache?

A headache is any pain in any part of the head.



## ARE THERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF HEADACHES?

Yes. Most headaches are tension headaches or migraines. Some health problems can also cause headaches, including fevers, dehydration, and more serious conditions like stroke and brain tumors.



## WHAT DOES A TENSION HEADACHE FEEL LIKE?

A tension headache is mild to moderately painful. It usually feels like a tight band around your head.

## WHAT DOES A MIGRAINE FEEL LIKE?

A migraine can cause very strong pain. It often is only on one side of the head. You usually have nausea and vomiting too. You may feel sensitive to light and sound.

## HOW CAN I FEEL BETTER?

### Healthy Lifestyle for Headache Prevention

**Follow a regular sleeping schedule:** Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time. Make sure to get enough sleep but not too much: 6 to 9 hours is right for most people.

**Watch what you eat and drink: Start by eating an overall healthy diet.** Certain foods can trigger migraines, like red wine, chocolate and hot dogs. Talk to your doctor about an elimination diet to help you figure out what foods may be causing your headaches. It is also important to eat healthy fruits and vegetables, and drink enough water.

**Exercise regularly:** Exercising for 30 minutes three times per week can help reduce the frequency and intensity of headaches.

### Supplements & Herbs

Some supplements and herbs have been shown to help with migraines. Talk to your health care practitioner before taking any of these supplements or herbs.

**Magnesium:** can be helpful for migraines related to menstruation.

**Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin):** has been shown to reduce migraines.

**Butterbur:** has been shown to reduce the frequency and duration of migraines.

**Feverfew:** has been shown to reduce the frequency of and the severity of migraines.

**Co-Enzyme Q-10:** has been shown to reduce the frequency of migraines.



**Fish Oil/Olive Oil:** has been shown to reduce the frequency of headaches.

## MIND AND BODY

Your mind and body are connected. This is why your thoughts and feelings are important to help reduce the frequency of your headaches.

### Develop a daily routine that can help you reduce stress. Here are some things you can do on your own:

- Deep breathing:** Deep breaths slow down your heart rate. This helps with stress.
- Self-hypnosis:** This technique helps you to connect your body and mind. You teach yourself to go into a dream-like state. This helps you focus your attention and relieve your headache.
- Posture awareness:** The way you stand and sit is important. Bad posture can cause muscle tension that could contribute to your headaches. Try to notice during the day how you are standing and sitting. Are you rounding your back or are you standing tall?

### Your health care practitioner can help you find a healthcare professional to try these techniques:

- Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR):** MBSR is a type of meditation training that helps with stress and pain. A meditation teacher can guide you and teach you to become more aware of your body.
- Acupuncture:** Acupuncture is a Traditional Chinese treatment using very thin needles in the skin. It can be uncomfortable but it is not usually painful.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** You will talk about your thoughts and feelings with a health professional. Together you will learn to make small changes to the way you think.
- Biofeedback:** A technique to learn how to control your body's functions, such as heart rate. This helps relax your muscles and reduce pain.
- Massage:** This can be very helpful for headaches caused by discomfort in the neck and shoulders.

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit [nciph.org/headache](http://nciph.org/headache)



