



How to treat a headache?

What you can do to help with certain headaches.

For a tension-type headache, the National Institutes of Health suggests taking acetaminophen (sold under the brand name Tylenol), aspirin or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). The agency advises you to notify your provider if you take these pain medicines more than three days a week.

Over-the-counter medicines may help with lesser degree migraines, but patients with cluster or more severe migraine symptoms will not see good results with these medications, according to Dr. Christine “Lollie” Hagen, a neurologist at Novant Health Winston Neurology – Kernersville Headache Clinic.

Hagen said there are many ways to treat migraine headaches. One method is to prevent them by using preventive medicines such as antidepressants, anti-epileptics, blood pressure medication and Botox injections.

Keeping a diary may help identify your triggers.

When a headache occurs, make note of the following:

- Day and time the pain began.
- What you ate and drank in the day prior to its onset.
- How much you slept the night before the episode.
- What you were doing and where you were right before the pain started.
- How long the headache lasted and what made it stop.

This information can help your provider come up with a treatment plan and help you avoid triggers. Hagen said it can also help providers assess if a treatment plan is helping.

Other NIH tips to help you manage a migraine.

- Stay hydrated by drinking water.
- Lie down in a quiet, dark room.
- Place a cool cloth on your head.

When should you seek medical help?

Some headaches may be signs of a serious medical problem and should not be overlooked.

You should seek medical help right away if you experience the following:

- The headache comes on rapidly and is explosive or violent.
- This is the worst headache you have ever felt.
- Along with headache, you have slurred speech, a loss of vision, confusion or loss of balance and trouble moving your limbs.
- The headache worsens over 24 hours.
- You have fever, stiff neck, nausea and vomiting as well as the headache.
- A head injury caused the headache.
- The pain is severe and just in one eye, with redness in that eye.
- You just start having headaches, especially after age 50.