

Name of Child: _____ Date: _____

Headaches

What is a headache?

A headache is pain anywhere in the head or neck. Headaches are common in children. Most headaches are mild and will go away on their own. Headaches may be triggered or worsened by certain types of foods, activities, medications, environmental factors (such as heat, humidity, and air pressure), or stress. They can also be caused by many other things, including:

- Colds or other illnesses
- High fever
- Hunger
- Mild dehydration or thirst
- Using video games or computers too long
- Weather changes

Some children do experience recurrent, severe headaches, called **migraines**. Doctors are still unsure exactly why children get migraines. Migraines can be **hereditary**, which means they can be passed down from parents to children. Migraines also have been linked to **traumatic brain injuries** (such as a **concussion**), hormone changes, or vision changes.

For more information, ask your child's nurse or doctor for the handout, **Concussions #1774**.

Signs and symptoms of headaches:

Every child's headache is different. However, some common signs and symptoms of headaches are head pain with:

- Dizziness
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Sensitivity to bright lights, loud noises, or certain odors
- Abdominal pain
- Vision changes
- Trouble focusing

Medicine for headaches:

Your child's doctor may prescribe medicine for your child's headaches. It is important to give your child the medicine exactly as ordered. Talk to your child's doctor before giving your child any herbs or other treatments for headaches.

Headache prevention tips:

Schedule sleep for your child:

- Have your child go to bed at the same time every day
- Try to wake your child around the same time every day
- Keep the same schedule on the weekends and during vacations
- During a 24 hour period:
 - Children ages 3 to 5 years old should sleep a total of 10-13 hours (including naps)
 - Children ages 6 to 12 years old should sleep 9 to 12 hours
 - Children ages 13 to 18 years old should sleep 8 to 10 hours
 - Avoid naps for children over the age of 5 years old

Ask your child's doctor or nurse for the handout, **How to Help Your Child Get Better Sleep, #1700**.

Give your child a well-balanced diet:

- Low blood sugar can trigger a headache.
- Eat three meals each day and make sure they include protein, fruits, vegetables and carbohydrates. Give your child healthy snacks.
 - No big meals, sugary snacks, or caffeine at least 3 hours before bedtime
 - Try warm milk or a small cup of decaffeinated hot tea
- If your child is hungry, give a small snack such as a piece of toast or yogurt.
- Too much sugar may lead to a rapid increase in blood sugar, followed by a rapid decrease in blood sugar, which can trigger a headache.
- Do not give your child caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant and caffeine withdrawal may cause headaches when blood levels of caffeine decrease.
- Keep your child hydrated: give your child plenty of water and do not give any drinks with caffeine or artificial sweeteners.

Have your child be active every day:

- Include activities such as riding a bike, swimming, taking a walk, or playing on a playground
 - Daily exercise helps tire the body and makes it easier to fall asleep at night
- Too much exercise or inconsistent patterns of exercise may trigger headaches

Decrease your child's stress:

- Stress may lead to an increase in both the number (**frequency**) of headaches and the intensity of headaches
- Relaxation and stress management may help decrease the number of headaches
- Have your child try yoga or meditation to help decrease stress
- Have your child try cognitive behavior therapy with a psychologist
- Have your child do deep breathing exercises to help decrease stress

Ask your child's doctor or nurse for the handout, **Deep Breathing Exercise #1781**.

Avoid any possible food triggers that can cause headaches:

- Chocolate
- Aged cheeses
- Cured meats
- Processed foods
- Foods with orange or red dyes, such as Hot Cheetos® and Takis®
- Citrus fruits
- Any food with monosodium glutamate (**MSG**) such as dry roasted nuts, Chinese food, and soy sauce
- Artificial sweeteners such as aspartame
- Salty chips and food

Other common headache triggers:

- Dehydration
- Too much caffeine
- Lack of sleep
- Skipped meals
- Birth control pills
- Stress
- Screen time on the computer or other electronic devices

Call your child's doctor right away or go to the Emergency

Department if your child has a headache with:

- New severe pain
- Vomiting more than 3 times in an hour
- Numbness or weakness to any part of the body
- Forgetfulness or seems confused
- Problems with balance or coordination
- Vomiting and the headache starts during sleeping

Headache diary:

Your child's doctor may ask you to keep track of your child's headaches. You can use the attached Headache Diary or any of the following Apps to track your child's headaches:

Migraine Buddy: www.migrainebuddy.com (for iPhone or Android)

iHeadache: www.iheadache.com (for iPhone)

Other headache resources:

American Migraine Foundation: www.achenet.org

Relaxation techniques by Dawn Buse, PhD: <http://www.dawnbuse.com/relaxation.htm>

Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse or doctor ways to help your child prevent headaches. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor what headache triggers are and how to help your child avoid them. (Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,

- call your child's doctor or
- call _____

If you want to know more about child health and illness,
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-933-1400
866-933-6459
www.phoenixchildrens.org
www.theemilycenter.org
Facebook: facebook.com/theemilycenter
Twitter: @emilycenter

Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

June 21, 2018 • In family review
#1841 • Written by Nicki Mitchell, MSN, RN, CPN

Headache Diary

Day	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Date							
Aura							
Time of pain onset							
Severity of Pain							
Treatment 1 (dose)							
Symptoms (nausea, throbbing, disability)							
Treatment 2 (dose)							
Treatment 3 (dose)							
Time to pain relief							
Noted triggers (caffeine, menses, etc)							
Type of headache (migraine, tension)							
Other comments or questions							

Headaches

Name of Health Care Provider: _____

Date returned: _____ db

Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read? Yes No

easy to read? Yes No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read? Yes No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading
this handout? Yes No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any
questions about the subject? Yes No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center
Health Education Specialist
Phoenix Children's Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

602-933-1395

Thank you for helping us!