

More people complain about headaches than almost any other medical issue. In fact, headaches affect approximately 45 million Americans each year. That works out to about one in every six people. It is probably fair to say that most of us have experienced a headache at some point in our lifetime. For many of us, it's just a minor inconvenience that either goes away on its own or after taking over-the-counter medications.

### Tension Headaches

The most common type of headache is the tension headache, accounting for about half of all cases. It is often described as a mild to moderate pain that feels like a tight band around your head. The pain is mostly felt in the forehead, temples or in the back of the head and neck. There are two types of tension headaches.

### Episodic

Often referred to as stress headaches, episodic tension headaches occur randomly and are triggered by stress, fatigue or anger. They usually go away with the use of over-the-counter (OTC) medications, relaxation or by getting away from the source of stress.

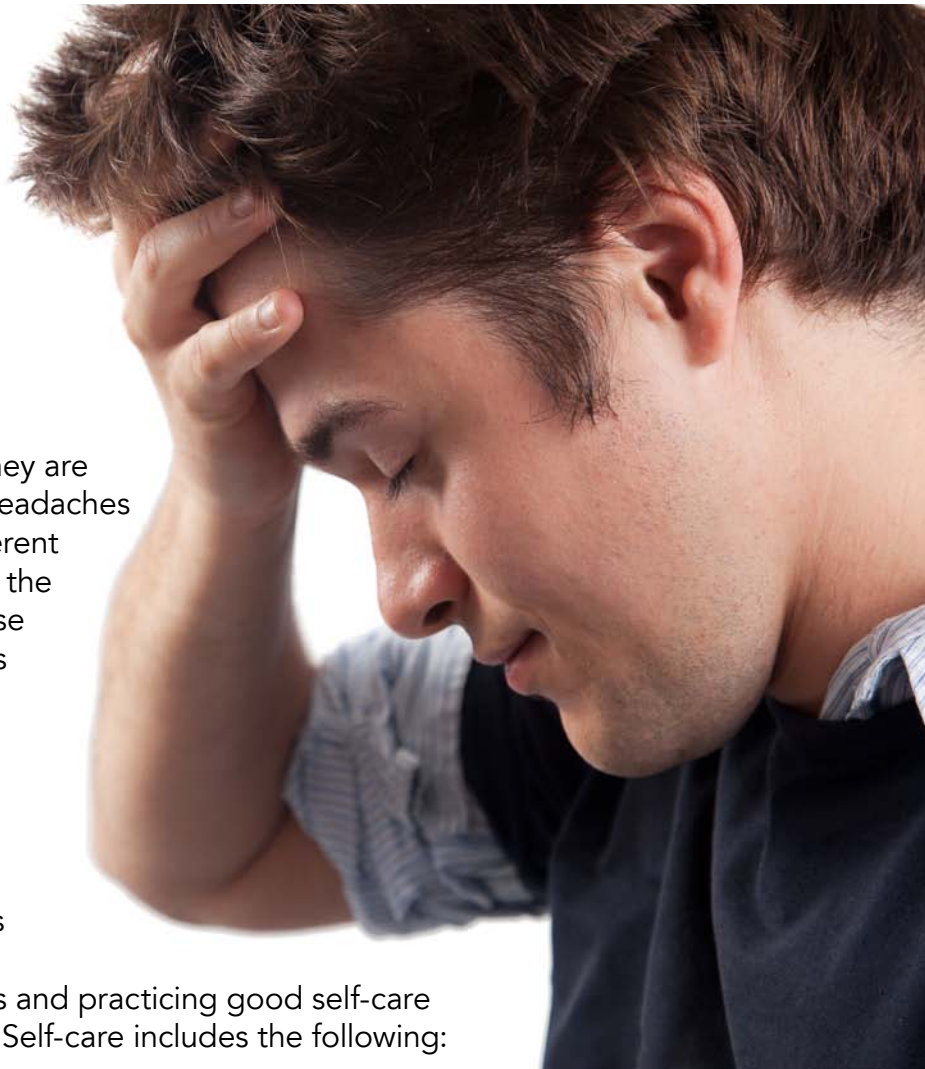
### Chronic

When headaches occur frequently (daily), they are classified as chronic. With chronic tension headaches the pain is always present, generally at different intensities throughout the day. They can be the result of anxiety or depression and can cause major disruptions in a person's lifestyle. This may include difficulty sleeping, weight loss, dizziness, poor concentration and fatigue. If these symptoms are present, you should consult your physician.

### Managing Tension Headaches

While the exact cause of tension headaches is not clear, stress is the most commonly recognized trigger. By managing your stress and practicing good self-care you can stop headaches before they occur. Self-care includes the following:

- Get six to eight hours of sleep each night
- Eat three, nutritionally balanced meals a day
- Perform regular physical activity three to five times a week



- Drink plenty of water
- Limit caffeine, alcohol and other drugs

Over-the-counter pain medications can also help eliminate or reduce the severity of tension headaches. There are two types of OTC pain relievers:

- Acetaminophen
  - Tylenol
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
  - Aspirin
  - Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Nuprin)
  - Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn)



Always follow the dosing information that is listed on the label and never take more than the recommended amount. Consult your physician if the maximum recommended amount does not provide relief.

## Migraine Headaches

While less common than tension headaches, migraines affect about 28 million Americans and roughly 21 million of those are female. The pain of a migraine is often felt around the eye or temple area and is typically described as an intense pulsing or throbbing on one side of the head. Migraine symptoms can occur in various combinations and may include pain, sensitivity to light and sound, and nausea with or without vomiting.

Migraine attacks can last anywhere from 4 to 72 hours, but the frequency and duration of attacks vary from person to person. Some migraine sufferers experience a sensation known as an aura that may occur before, during and after a migraine. This may include visual disturbances such as flashes of light, wavy lines or blind spots.

While there is no cure for migraines, medications can help reduce the frequency and severity of attacks. A variety of medications have been designed specifically to treat migraines. These drugs fall into two broad groups:

**Pain-relieving** - These types of drugs are taken during a migraine for the purpose of stopping the symptoms that have already begun.

**Preventive** - These medications are taken on a regular basis to reduce the frequency or severity of migraine attacks.

Everyone's migraine experience is different, so check with your healthcare provider to help find the best medication and treatment plan for you.