HEADACHES

Headaches are one of the most common health complaints. If you have frequent headaches, keep a diary of when, where, and why the headaches occur to help with diagnosis of the source.

Common Types of Headaches:

Tension or Muscular
Caused by tense or tight muscles in the face, neck, and scalp. Dull ache in the forehead, above the ears, and at the back of the head. Pain in the neck or shoulders that travels to the head.

Migraine
Occur when blood vessels in the head open too wide or close too tightly. Headaches start on one side of the head or one side hurts more than the other. May cause feelings of nausea, seeing spots or zigzag flashes of light, and sensitivity to light and noise.

Sinus
Occurs when fluids in the nose are unable to drain and build up pressure. Pain in the forehead, cheekbones, and nose that worsens in the morning. Increased pain when you bend over or touch your face. Stuffy nose.

There are many causes of headaches:
- Changes in sleep patterns or lack of sleep
- Stress
- Eyestrain
- Doing repetitive work
- Staying in one position for a long time
- Menstruation (in females)
- Caffeine, alcohol, and/or certain foods
- Strenuous exercise
- Colds
- Allergies
- Dirty or polluted water
- Airplane travel
- Environmental pollutants
- Tobacco smoke
- Exposure to chemicals
- Low blood sugar
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Uncorrected vision problems
- Temporomandibular Joint Dysfunction (TMJ)
- Depression
- Medical conditions

Too Much Tylenol?
Did you know that you can actually cause headaches if you overuse over-the-counter or prescribed pain relievers?

Brain Freeze!
Eating or drinking something very cold, such as ice cream, can give you an instant headache. Try warming the cold treat for a few seconds in the front of your mouth!

Is the headache associated with:
- A head injury
- A blow to the head that causes severe pain, enlarged pupils, vomiting, confusion, or lethargy?
- Loss of consciousness

Does a severe headache occur along with 1 or more of the following symptoms of meningitis:
- High fever
- Stiff neck
- Nausea or vomiting
- Lethargy (weakness)
- Purple or bumpy red skin rash
- Sensitivity to light

Has the headache been occurring for more than 2 to 3 days and does the intensity/frequency keep increasing?

**SELF-CARE:**
Take an over-the-counter medicine for pain as directed. Rest in a quiet, dark room with eyes closed. Massage tension areas. Take a warm shower. Place a cold or warm cloth over the area that aches. Relax. Avoid things that bring on headaches.

Reduce the amount of alcohol consumed. After alcohol, have 2 or more glasses of water before you go to sleep; eat solid foods; get plenty of rest. Do NOT mix Tylenol (acetaminophen) with alcohol.

Headaches: What Kind of Care Do I Need?

Has the headache come on suddenly and does it hurt more than others you have had?

Do you have symptoms of migraine or sinus headaches from the previous page?

Is the headache not relieved by over-the-counter pain relievers?

Do you have to take a pain reliever more than 3 times a week for at least 3 weeks for headaches?

Have you noticed the headache only after taking newly prescribed or over-the-counter medications?

Has the headache occurred at the same time of day, week, or month, such as with a menstrual period and is not relieved by over-the-counter medications?