

# Headaches

Headaches are a very common condition that most people will experience many times during their lives. They are defined as pain or discomfort in the head or face and can vary in location, frequency, and intensity. Headaches are classified as primary or secondary. A primary headache means the headache is the main medical problem. A secondary headache is related to an underlying medical condition (e.g., neck injury, eye problems, jaw, teeth, sinus infection). The best ways to prevent headaches, in general, are to reduce stress and determine/avoid triggers. Common types of headaches include:



## Tension Headache

Tension headaches are the most common type of headache. Stress and tight muscles are often factors in tension headaches. They are often characterized by a dull pain that feels like a band around the head. The pain may involve the back of the head or neck and usually has a slow onset.

## Cluster Headache

Cluster headaches usually occur in a series that may last weeks or months. Symptoms often include severe pain on one side of the head, usually behind one eye. Cluster headaches may involve swelling of the eyelid, runny nose or congestion, and swelling of the forehead.

## Migraine Headache

Migraine headaches are characterized by symptoms other than pain such as sensitivity to light, nausea, vomiting, lightheadedness, and other visual symptoms. Migraines have distinct phases, although not all people experience all phases.

### *Phases of migraine headache:*

- Premonition or prodromal phase – A change in mood or behavior may occur in the hours or days before the onset of the headache.
- Aura phase – Visual, sensory, or motor symptoms can precede the headache. Vision changes, hallucinations, numbness, and changes in speech may occur.
- Headache phase – Phase during which the actual headache with throbbing pain occurs. During this phase, individuals may experience sensitivity to light and motion, as well as fatigue, depression, and anxiety.
- Resolution phase – During this phase, pain lessens and may be replaced with fatigue, difficulty concentrating and irritability.

Most of the time, headaches, although painful, don't pose a serious threat. However, headaches can sometimes be a symptom of something more serious. Contact your healthcare provider right away if your headache is severe and accompanied by other worrisome symptoms.

Source: John Hopkins Medicine ([hopkinsmedicine.org](https://hopkinsmedicine.org))