

# Tips for Preventing Headaches

The best treatment for headaches is to stop them from occurring in the first place. Effective headache management and prevention includes determining what type of headache you have (e.g., tension headache, cluster headache, migraine) as well as avoiding your personal headache triggers and practicing certain healthy lifestyle choices. The following strategies may help!



- **Avoid your known triggers, such as certain foods and beverages, lack of sleep, and fasting.** Keeping a headache diary can help determine what triggers your headaches so you can avoid them.
- **Change your eating habits.** Eat healthy meals at about the same times daily. Avoid food or drinks, such as those containing caffeine, that seem to trigger headaches. Lose weight if you're obese.
- **Exercise regularly.** Regular aerobic physical activity can improve your physical and mental well-being and reduce stress.
- **Get enough sleep.** The average adult needs seven to eight hours of sleep a night. It's best to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Rest in a quiet, dark environment.
- **Effectively manage stress.** Stress is a common trigger of chronic headaches. Get organized. Simplify your schedule. Plan ahead. Stay positive. Try stress-reduction techniques, such as yoga, tai chi, or meditation.
- **Take medications as prescribed by your healthcare provider.** Migraine and cluster headaches may require specific medicine management. Also, avoid overuse of over-the-counter (OTC) medications; taking certain headache medications more than twice a week can increase the severity and frequency of your headaches. Always consult your healthcare provider before changing/stopping medications.

While most headaches do not pose a serious threat, contact your healthcare provider immediately if your headache is accompanied by any of the following:

- Stiff neck
- Fever
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Convulsions
- Shortness of breath
- Confusion
- Muscle weakness
- Double vision
- Change in level of consciousness
- Worst headache ever, or a new type of headache
- Headaches following a head injury
- Pain that is worsened by straining, such as sneezing or coughing
- Sudden onset of pain
- Personality changes

Sources: John Hopkins Medicine ([hopkinsmedicine.org](http://hopkinsmedicine.org)), Mayo Clinic ([mayoclinic.org](http://mayoclinic.org))