

Headaches

Headaches are pains that occur in any region of the head. They can occur on both sides of the head or be isolated to a certain location. More than 10 million people in the UK get headaches regularly, making them one of the most common health complaints. But most aren't serious and are easily treated.

Some of the main types of headaches are described below:

Tension Headaches

Tension headaches are the most common type of headache and are what we think of as normal, "everyday" headaches. They feel like a constant ache that affects both sides of the head, as though a tight band is stretched around it. A tension headache normally won't be severe enough to prevent you doing daily activities. They usually last for around 30 minutes to several hours, but can last for several days. The exact cause is unclear, but tension headaches have been linked to things such as stress, poor posture, skipping meals and dehydration. Tension headaches can usually be treated with ordinary painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen. Lifestyle changes, such as getting regular sleep, reducing stress and staying well hydrated may also help.

Migraines

Migraines are less common but more severe than tension headaches. Some people have other symptoms such as nausea or vomiting (feeling or being sick) and increased sensitivity to light or sound

Cluster headaches

Cluster headaches are a rare type of headache that occur in clusters for a month or two at around the same time of year. They're very painful, causing intense pain around one eye, and often occur with other symptoms, such as watering or red eye and a blocked or runny nose.

Painkillers

Generally over the counter painkillers, such as paracetamol, aspirin and ibuprofen, can help to reduce your headache symptoms. For migraines, there are most effective if taken at the first signs of symptoms, to allow time to absorb into your bloodstream and ease your symptoms. It is not advisable to wait until the headache worsens before taking painkillers because by this point it is often too late for the medication to work.

Soluble painkillers (tablets that dissolve in a glass of water) are good alternative because they are absorbed quickly by your body

Self Care

There are a number of steps that can reduce the risk of headaches and ease the pain of headaches that do arise:

- Apply a heat pack or ice to your head or neck (avoid extreme temperatures)
- Avoid stress where possible, and develop healthy coping strategies for an avoidable stress
- Eat regular meals and drink fluids
- Exercise regularly
- Get enough rest and regular sleep
- Minimise screen time

It is also useful to ensure you have seen an optician recently to rule out eye strain as a cause. If you have gas appliances at home, ensure they have been safely tested for carbon monoxide if your headaches are worse when you are at home. The most common methods recommended for treating headaches are rest and over the counter pain relief.

See a doctor urgently, if, along with the headache you feel sick, vomit or find light or noise painful; you feel weak; your jaw hurts when eating; blurred or double vision; your scalp feels sore.

Call 999 or go to the Emergency Department if:

- You injured your head badly – for example, from a fall or accident;
- The headache came on suddenly and is extremely painful;
- You have an extremely painful headache and:
- Sudden problems speaking or remembering things;
- Loss of vision
- You're feeling drowsy or confused;
- You have a very high temperature
- Feel hot and shivery, have a stiff neck or a rash;
- You have arm or leg weakness or facial droop;
- The white part of your eye is red
- You have fainted

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day. If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.

For additional medical advice, if your symptoms or condition worsens:

Contact your GP

NHS 111:

Get help with your symptoms, NHS111:
Information to help you manage your health:

Telephone 111

<https://111.nhs.uk/>
www.nhs.uk

In an emergency telephone 999

Emergency Department (A&E)
Alexandra Hospital
Woodrow Drive
Redditch B98 7UB

Tel: 01527 512030

Minor Injury Unit
Kidderminster Hospital
Bewdley Road
Kidderminster DY11 6RJ

Tel: 01562 513039

Emergency Department (A&E)
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester WR5 1DD

Tel: 01905 760743