

Headache advice

Information for patients
& parents



leeds children's
hospital

caring about children

The following may be helpful whilst you are waiting for your appointment and will help to achieve a better assessment.

Your doctor has advised that you have headaches. There are lots of different types of headache, e.g. migraine or tension headache. Please see your GP if you have headache that wakes you in the night or early morning, or if you have early morning vomiting (that is not obviously from a bug).

Headache diary

Please download this from:

<https://bpna.org.uk/audit/Headache%20diary.PDF>

The benefit of doing this for a month is that it allows an objective assessment of the frequency and severity of your headache symptoms so that if there is a decision to start a preventer medication, the benefit can be properly assessed.

Sleep

Insufficient sleep has a big impact on headache severity and frequency. Whilst some people need less sleep than others and teenagers definitely seem to want to go to sleep late and to get up late, a regular sleep pattern can help to reduce headaches.

The following website gives basic information about improving sleep patterns:

<https://teensleephub.org.uk/>

Gadgets

There are 2 things with gadgets which can make headaches worse. One is that many people have not found the night shift settings which moves the light spectrum from blue daylight which stimulates the brain to the more yellow night time setting and makes the brain think it is night time. This only applies to smart phones.

The second thing is posture. The vast majority of children sit on their phones in a slouched position with their head bent over the phone. This is often for a long time and is very bad for the neck. Stiff necks, even if you are not aware of this as a problem, can trigger migraines.

Please review this site to check out "text neck" and how to improve this:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/common-posture-mistakes-and-fixes/>

Fluids and Food:

Busy teenagers often do not make enough time to eat and to drink enough. This link can point you in the right direction to choose a water reminder app. This is a collection put together by another migraine sufferer which is why it has been picked for you to start with:

[https://www.bustle.com/p/5-apps-that-can-help-you-drink-more-water-9765586.](https://www.bustle.com/p/5-apps-that-can-help-you-drink-more-water-9765586)

There are plenty of water reminder apps, however, so take your pick. Water can be still, fizzy or flavoured with a slice of lemon or other fruit. Some flavoured waters contain additives that can make headaches worse so watch out for these. Avoid caffeine containing drinks.

Having regular meals is also sensible and goes with having enough to drink. Breakfast, snack at morning break and lunch are the most important as they gear you up for the school day or weekend. Having a prolonged fast or period without food can bring on headaches.

What if the headache continues?

If despite all of these life style choices, you are still having headaches, then medical advice for children aged 7-16 is as follows:

At onset of headache, take 200 - 400mg of ibuprofen - this is best with a drink of milk or a small amount of food to avoid heart burn which can be triggered by this type of medicine.

Generally lifestyle changes and simple analgesia are a better option for most children than a daily medication. Daily painkillers can cause analgesia headache.



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