

Pediatric Migraine Headache

Weight (Kg):

Kids get headaches too!

- Many children suffer from headaches, just like their parents!
- Most headaches in children are harmless. That is, they are not the result of severe disease.
- It is estimated that 5-10% of children and 8-23% of teenagers suffer from migraine headaches.
- Disability from headaches can be significant with many days lost from school or play.
- Many adults who suffer from headaches started having headaches as children.
- Migraine headaches may start at almost any age.
- Migraine headaches often run in families.

What causes a migraine?

There are many theories about what causes a migraine, but most experts believe that migraines are related to faulty control mechanisms between the brainstem structures and the rest of the brain. With every heart beat the blood vessels expand and contract slightly-which during a migraine produces the throbbing pain that many children feel.

What are the symptoms of migraine headache?

The Headache itself:

- Moderate to severe pain
- Pulsating or throbbing pain
- Pain that is worse on one side (although pain can be on both sides)
- Pain that is worse when you move or do daily activities

Other symptoms:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Dizziness
- Mood changes
- Aura: an infrequent occurrence in children; may present as visual disturbances such as flickering lights, wavy lines, or 'seeing spots'

Are there triggers for migraines?

There are many triggers that are linked to migraine, but every child is different. The most common triggers in children are irregular sleep, skipped meals, and dehydration. There are many other possible triggers and it is important to monitor the migraines to see if any of these or others is a trigger for your child.

- Weather changes
- Stress
- Caffeine
- Certain foods such as chocolate, nuts, aged cheese, smoked or pickled foods, and nitrite/nitrate preserved foods (hotdogs, pepperoni)
- Alcohol
- MSG (sometimes found in Chinese food)
- Strong odors (perfume, gasoline)
- Menstruation

What is the treatment for migraines?

The most important way to lessen the impact of migraines is to try and prevent the headaches from occurring. This should include avoiding triggers, eating regular meals, drinking plenty of water, keeping a regular sleep schedule, exercising, and reducing stress. If a headache should develop, your child should start treatment as soon as possible with an over-the-counter pain reliever such as Tylenol or Motrin/Advil. Aspirin should be avoided in children. It may also help to have your child try and rest in a cool dark room with little noise or disturbance. If your doctor has prescribed your child a specific medication for their migraines they should also take that within the first hour of onset of the headache.

When should I be concerned or contact my doctor?

- If the headache wakes your child from sleep.
- If the headache is associated with early morning vomiting.
- If the headaches are worsening in intensity or becoming more frequent.
- The headache is different from previous headaches.
- You notice personality changes.
- The headache is not improving with regular or routine measures and medications.

Please seek medical attention immediately if:

- Your child describes his/her headache as the 'worst headache of my life.'
- There are abnormal symptoms such as weakness, paralysis, difficulty walking or speaking, or confusion.
- The headache is associated with fever and stiff neck.

If you have other questions or concerns call your doctors office or *HealthLine at 811.*