

Headaches and Migraines



There are different types of headaches but they can sometimes be a symptom of another underlying problem. This covers primary headaches (those not associated with another medical condition).

Symptoms include:

- Tension headaches - a dull ache with a pressing or tightening sensation across the forehead
- Cluster headaches – severe and one sided often associated with a sense of restlessness
- Sinusitis- one sided behind and around the eye, worsening when bending forward
- Medication overuse – worse on waking and is present for more than 15 days a month and becomes worse on discontinuing analgesics
- Migraine - pulsating and throbbing, it can be one or both sides of the head and can be accompanied with nausea and sensitivity to light or sound

Red flag symptoms

- Sudden onset
- Different or more severe than any previous headache
- Associated with recent head trauma, neck stiffness, vomiting, altered level of consciousness, paralysis or weakness, blackouts
- Severe and associated with fever, or rash

Self-care advice

- Reassurance, stress-relieving techniques and exercise are often useful in sufferers of tension headache
- Keep a headache diary to help pinpoint possible triggers
- Stay well hydrated and limit how much caffeine and alcohol you drink
- Medication overuse headaches need to be treated with abrupt withdrawal of the associated medication, but symptoms will get worse before they get better
- Migraines can be helped with either simple painkillers or triptans if relief is not seen with simple analgesics

Onward referrals

- Many episodes/continual headaches
- Treatment provides no relief

Signposting

- Pharmacy First Scotland

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