

Help For My Headaches

What steps can I take to reduce my headaches?

Sleep



- Be consistent by waking up and going to bed around same time every day
- Sleep for 8 to 10 hours each night
- Avoid the use of electronics at least 30 minutes before to bed

Exercise



- Get 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise every day
- Too much or too little exercise can trigger headaches

Avoid caffeine



- Caffeine and sugar can trigger migraines and interfere with your sleep
- Colas, tea, coffee, and chocolate are a few examples of drinks or food that contain caffeine
- Avoid energy drinks like Monster and Rockstar that contain large amounts of caffeine and sugar

Drink plenty of water



- Aim to drink about 8 glasses (64 ounces) of water a day
- Add a small amount of fruit to your water to flavor it, if desired

Manage your stress



- Spend time doing things to relax, like meditation, yoga, massage, counseling, writing in a journal or other activities that make you feel calm
- Kidshealth.org has some helpful tips for managing stress

Medicine



- Over the counter pain relievers include Advil (ibuprofen), Tylenol (acetaminophen), Aleve (Naprosyn), Excedrin migraine (contains caffeine and aspirin so do not take if you have a fever or the flu).
- Caffeine can be used to treat headaches, but only if you do not regularly have caffeine. Use only the medicines recommended by your healthcare provider. Check with your healthcare provider before taking any medicine.

To Learn More

- Neurology
206-987-2078
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

- If you take a pain reliever, try to take it within 30 minutes of the start of your headache.
- If over the counter pain relievers do not help, talk to your healthcare provider about prescription medicine.
- Take medicine no more than 2 to 3 times a week.
- Sometimes taking a daily preventive medicine helps if you are doing all the first steps but still having frequent headaches. Talk to your healthcare provider about this option. You will still need to continue doing the first steps even when taking preventive medicine.

Know your headache triggers

Things that often cause your headaches are called “triggers.” You may be able to prevent your headaches if you learn your triggers and avoid them. If you cannot always avoid your triggers, try to minimize them.

Keep a headache journal seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE1668.pdf. Use it to record your headaches and what you were doing before it started to learn your triggers so you can avoid them.

Common headache triggers

- Temperature
- Noise
- Light
- Smells
- Caffeine

What else can I do?

- Don't give up. Keep doing the first steps (sleep, nutrition, exercise, drink water, manage stress, avoid your triggers). It can take a couple of weeks for these steps to make a change.
- If you feel a headache coming on, try seeking a quiet, dark space as soon as possible.
- Get your eyes checked to make sure eyestrain is not contributing to your headaches.
- Try biofeedback, massage therapy or acupuncture therapy. Ask your us for more information or a referral.
- “Headaches” kidshealth.org/en/teens/headaches.html
- Headache Relief Guide (website) headachereliefguide.com
- For details about common triggers and headache medicines, read our handout for parents ‘Headache Help for Your Child or Teen’ seattlechildrens.org/pdf/PE887.pdf .
- A book that can be helpful for dealing with chronic headaches is “Managing Your Child’s Chronic Pain” by Dr. TM Palermo and Dr. EF Law (available in the Family Resource Center 206-987-2201).
- Download a headache app on your smart phone or tablet to help you track your headaches, such as Migraine Buddy.



MigraineBuddy