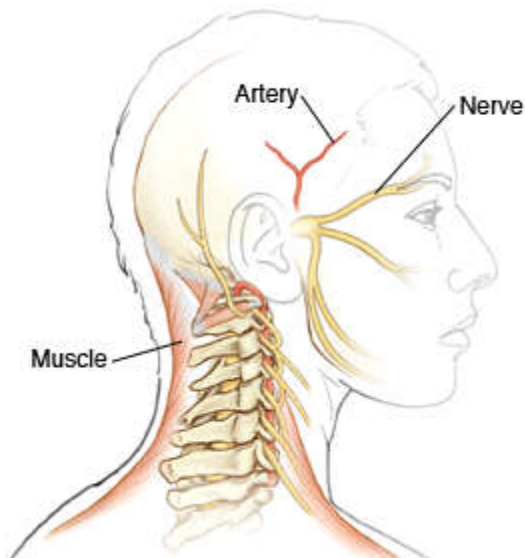


## Headache, Unspecified



A number of things can cause headaches. The cause of your headache isn't clear. But it doesn't seem to be a sign of any serious illness.

You could have a tension headache or a migraine headache.

Stress can cause a tension headache. This can happen if you tense the muscles of your shoulders, neck, and scalp without knowing it. If this stress lasts long enough, you may develop a tension headache.

It is not clear why migraines occur, but certain things called "triggers" can raise the risk of having a migraine attack. Migraine triggers may include emotional stress or depression, or by hormone changes during the menstrual cycle. Other triggers include birth control pills and other medicines, alcohol or caffeine, foods with tyramine (such as aged cheese, wine), eyestrain, weather changes, missed meals, and lack of sleep or oversleeping.

Other causes of headache include:

- Viral illness with high fever
- Head injury with concussion
- Sinus, ear, or throat infection
- Dental pain and jaw joint (TMJ) pain

More serious but less common causes of headache include stroke, brain hemorrhage, brain tumor, meningitis, and encephalitis.

### Home care

Follow these tips when taking care of yourself at home:

- Don't drive yourself home if you were given pain medicine for your headache. Instead, have someone else drive you home. Try to sleep when you get home. You should feel much better when you wake up.
- Apply heat to the back of your neck to ease a neck muscle spasm. Take care of a migraine headache by putting an ice pack on your forehead or at the base of your skull.
- If you have nausea or vomiting, eat a light diet until your headache eases.
- If you have a migraine headache, use sunglasses when in the daylight or around bright indoor lighting until your symptoms get better. Bright glaring light can make this type of headache worse.

### **Follow-up care**

Follow up with your healthcare provider, or as advised. Talk with your provider if you have frequent headaches. He or she can help figure out a treatment plan. By knowing the earliest signs of headache, and starting treatment right away, you may be able to stop the pain yourself.

### **When to seek medical advice**

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of these occur:

- Your head pain suddenly gets worse after sexual intercourse or strenuous activity
- Your head pain doesn't get better within 24 hours
- You aren't able to keep liquids down (repeated vomiting)
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Stiff neck
- Extreme drowsiness, confusion, or fainting
- Dizziness or dizziness with spinning sensation (vertigo)
- Weakness in an arm or leg or one side of your face
- You have trouble talking or seeing