



You came to the emergency department with a headache. The doctor examined you and found no sign of a serious cause, so it is safe for you to go home. This sheet explains how to manage headaches and when to come back.

What is it?

Most headaches are not dangerous. Common types are tension headaches, which feel like a tight band around the head, and migraines, which cause throbbing pain, often with feeling sick or being sensitive to light. Triggers include stress, poor sleep, missed meals, not drinking enough, too much screen time, and using pain medicines too often.

Looking after yourself at home

- Rest in a quiet, dark room if light or noise makes the pain worse.
- Drink plenty of water and eat regular meals.
- Try to sleep and wake at regular times.
- A cool cloth on your forehead or a warm pack on your neck may help.
- Keep a headache diary to spot your triggers.
- Cut down on caffeine slowly rather than stopping suddenly.

Medicines

- Paracetamol or ibuprofen can help with pain, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Avoid ibuprofen if you have a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some types of asthma, or are pregnant, unless your doctor says it is safe.
- Do not take pain medicines for headache on more than 2 or 3 days a week; overuse can cause more headaches.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre within 1 to 2 weeks if headaches keep coming back.
- See your doctor sooner if your headaches change pattern or you need pain medicines often.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- A sudden, severe headache — the worst you have ever had
- Headache with fever, a stiff neck, or a rash
- Confusion, weakness, slurred speech, or loss of vision
- Headache that follows a head injury
- A seizure (fit), fainting, or becoming very drowsy
- Headache with vomiting that will not stop



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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