

Kid's get headaches too!
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When your child complains of a headache and even starts crying due to the pain, it can pretty scary! It is good to know, however, that most children headaches are benign and do not indicate any underlying serious condition. Children, in fact, get the same type of headaches that adults do, but their symptoms may be different. In general symptoms will help identify the type of headache and when you need to seek medical help.

Migraines headaches have a large genetic component and can occur as early as infancy. They are usually accompanied by sensitivity to light and sound, throbbing type pain, and nausea and vomiting. They may even cause stomach pain called abdominal migraines.

Other causes of headaches can include illness and infections such as strep throat, sinus, or ear infections. Serious infections such as meningitis is usually accompanied by neck stiffness and fever. Headache caused by head trauma should be evaluated by a medical professional if vision changes occur, pain steadily worsens, or the child becomes more and more sleepy. Stress and anxiety are another common cause of headache. This may become more evident with changes such as divorce, change or start of school, difficulty with peers or teachers.

Serious problems in the brain, such as a tumor, although rare, can present with headache. Typically, in these cases, however, there are other symptoms, such as visual problems, dizziness, and lack of coordination.

Treatment options for headaches include cool compresses to the forehead, Tylenol, or ibuprofen. Often the best non-medical treatment is to lie down in a dark, quiet room. Caffeinated drinks may also help with migraines. It is also important to not give Tylenol or ibuprofen on a regular basis as this can cause rebound headaches. For some children with more severe, benign headaches, prescription medication(s) may be needed and your pediatrician may refer you to a neurologist for management. It is also a good idea to keep a journal of your child's headaches of when they occur and what possible triggers were involved.

As stated earlier, most headaches are not serious, but you should seek prompt medical care if your child's headache wakes him from his sleep, worsens in intensity or frequency, associated with vision changes or persistent vomiting, particularly in the morning. These symptoms may indicate a more serious condition and require a more extensive medical evaluation.