

# Headache - Muscle Tension

## Definition

- Pain or discomfort in the muscles of the scalp
- This includes the forehead to the back of the head
- The most common type of recurrent headache

## Health Information

### Symptoms

- Gives a feeling of tightness in a band around the head.
- The neck muscles may become sore and tight.
- No nausea or vomiting with this type of headache.

### Causes

- Overuse of the scalp and neck muscles
- Often from staying in one position for a long time. This can happen when reading or using a computer.
- Some children get muscle tension headaches as a reaction to stress or worry.
- Examples of stress in children are pressure for better grades or family arguments.

### Pain Scale

- **Mild:** Your child feels pain and tells you about it. But, the pain does not keep your child from any normal activities. School, play and sleep are not changed.
- **Moderate:** The pain keeps your child from doing some normal activities. It may wake him or her up from sleep.
- **Severe:** The pain is very bad. It keeps your child from doing all normal activities.

## Care Advice

### 1. Overview:

- Muscle tension headaches are the most common type of headache.
- It's seen in children and adults. Most often doesn't start before 5 years old.
- They are easy to treat at home.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

### 2. Pain Medicine:

- To help with the pain, give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen. Use as needed.

### 3. Cold Pack:

- Put a cold pack or a cold wet washcloth on the forehead.
- If the pain is worse somewhere else, put the cold pack there.
- Do this for 20 minutes. Repeat as needed.

### 4. Stretching:

- Stretch and massage any tight neck muscles.

### 5. Rest:

- Lie down in a quiet place and relax until feeling better.

6. **Stress Management and Prevention:**

- If something bothers your child, help him talk about it. Help him get it off his mind.
- Teach your child to take breaks when he is doing school work. Help your child to relax during these breaks.
- Teach your child the importance of getting enough sleep.
- Some children may feel pressure to achieve more or be perfect. This may cause headaches. If this is the case with your child, help him find a better balance.

7. **Prevention of Muscle Tension Headaches:**

- **Sleep:** Teach your child the importance of getting enough sleep.
- **Meals:** Don't skip meals.
- **Exercise:** Exercise daily.

8. **What to Expect:**

- With treatment, most muscle tension headaches last a few hours.
- Sometimes they last all day, but they go away with sleep.

9. **Return to School:**

- Children with muscle tension headaches should not miss any school.

## Call Your Doctor If

- Headache becomes severe
- Vomiting occurs
- Headache lasts more than 3 days
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

### Pediatric Care Advice

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