

So you have a headache? *By Shari Alguire, PA-C*

Headaches have been plaguing mankind since the beginnings of human history. We know this because in 1500 B.C., scrolls found buried with Egyptian mummies mention headaches. This makes it clear that this common problem is definitely not a 21st century phenomena.

Headaches can vary from person to person. Some lucky souls can go their whole lives without ever having a headache while others are plagued day in and day out. Given the variety and scope of headaches, how does one make sense of it?

Ninety percent of all headaches fall under a few categories which include migraine, cluster and episodic tension-type headaches. So what type of treatment is available for the 18% of women and 12% of the total population that otherwise suffers from headaches? Treatment depends on the type of headache one experiences.

Migraines are one of the more common types of recurrent headaches and often will be one sided, pounding or throbbing, and may be associated with vomiting, or sensitivity to light or sound. For migraines we often recommend regular exercise, regular sleep patterns, avoidance of medication overuse, avoiding triggers such as skipping meals and, sometimes, daily medication to control migraines.

Tension headaches are often described as tight hat-like band around the head, pressure, squeezing type pain, which

sometimes goes into the neck and shoulders. This type of headache can be stress related, although posture issues can trigger it as well. Often meditation, exercise, stretching, relaxation and biofeedback (a technique which allows individuals to control the body's responses and minimize symptoms) can help address this type of headache although medications may be required as well.

Cluster headaches are one of the more severe types of headaches. This condition often involves recurrent, very severe one sided pain often associated with severe tearing or runny nose on the same side, and will recur over and over during a cycle. Sufferers have been known to commit suicide in an attempt to relieve their pain because the symptoms are so severe and debilitating. There are effective treatments for cluster headaches which include daily medications, use of high dose oxygen or high dose lidocaine which can bring relief.

It is important to remember that if you develop an unusual WORST headache ever, with very abrupt onset, or headache with fever, stiff neck, severe vomiting, or one sided weakness, please seek emergency care.

For those of you ready to discuss headaches with your provider, I encourage you to create a summary of your headache history. By providing details on how often they occur, how often they last and where the pain originates, we can work together to determine what can be done to help.

Holiday Schedule

All Thunderbird Internal Medicine offices will be closed for the Thanksgiving Holiday on Thursday, November 28st. We will see patients on an urgent care basis on Friday the 29th at both our Phoenix and Glendale locations. We are thankful to you, our patients, for your continued trust in our care!



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