

What can I do for my child when an attack comes?

Try to get your child to a cool, dark place to lie down with a cool washcloth across the forehead.

Most often, simple over-the-counter pain medicines like ibuprofen or acetaminophen will be effective. Don't wait to begin medication. It is really important to take the medicine as soon as the pain begins. Pain medicines work best when taken within 30 minutes of the onset of the pain.

Your doctor may also prescribe pain medicine or medicines for upset stomach, if necessary.

When home remedies fail, your doctor may recommend that your child undergo an acute migraine therapy in the hospital.

CHKD's Short-term Procedure Unit has an infusion center with an acute migraine protocol where headache patients can be sent by their neurologist for immediate treatment of persistent headaches that are unresponsive to oral therapies.



How can I keep the attacks from coming back?

For children with frequent attacks, some lifestyle changes are necessary:

- Eat regular meals without fail. Never skip eating (many teens skip meals). This means breakfast every day.
- Keep a regular sleep schedule; avoid staying up too late or becoming over tired.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes a day.
- Be a detective and search for triggers such as diet (cheese, chocolates, nuts, MSG, pickles), stress, overexertion, and over-scheduling.
- Drink 4-plus glasses of water a day.
- Moderate caffeine intake (limit tea, coffee and caffeinated sodas).
- No smoking! (No chewing tobacco either.)

Also, your doctor may prescribe a course of medications to prevent attacks.

- Examples: cyproheptadine, amitriptyline, topiramate, valproic acid, propranolol

Helpful dietary supplements:

- Magnesium (400 – 800 mg per day)
- Vitamin B2 (400 mg per day)



Life stresses can be a prominent trigger. Many psychologists are skilled at stress management and a technique called biofeedback that may help reduce the disability from migraine.

When should I consult with my child's doctor about headaches?

Symptoms that need medical evaluation include the following:

- Headaches gradually worsen, getting more severe or steadily more frequent.
- Quality of the headache changes.
- Headaches cause the child to wake up with pain or vomiting.
- Headaches are associated with changing balance, coordination, personality or school performance.
- Headache occurs in a child younger than 3 years of age.
- Headache is triggered by exercise or lifting/straining.