

# Managing Simple Headaches

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## **Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Neurology**

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# Agenda

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- What are simple headaches?
- Frequently Asked Questions
  - What is the root cause of migraine symptoms?
  - What non-medicine options do I have to treat migraine?
  - Do I need an MRI or bloodwork to diagnose my headache disorder?
  - What can my patient do about headaches at school?
  - How do I know my patient does not have a brain tumor or aneurysm?
- Worrisome Headache Red Flags (SNOOP)





# What are simple headaches?

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# Simple Headaches

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- Simple headaches are primary headache disorders, usually tension-type or migraine.
  - They can typically be managed with over the counter or prescribed medication
  - Lifestyle modifications such as getting enough sleep, staying well hydrated, eating healthy and regularly timed meals, staying physically active, and managing stress are also helpful





# What is the root cause of migraine symptoms?

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# What is the root cause of migraine symptoms?

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- Migraine is a complex neurologic disease that has genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors that contribute





# What non-medicine options do I have to treat migraine?

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# What non-medicine options do I have to treat migraine?

- Lifestyle modifications can include
  - Getting adequate sleep
  - Avoiding prolonged periods of fasting (don't skip meals)
  - Managing stress
  - Exercising regularly
  - Maintaining healthy body weight and nutrition
  - Avoiding regular caffeine use







**Do I need an MRI or bloodwork to diagnose my patient's headache disorder?**

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# Do I need an MRI or bloodwork to diagnose my patient's headache disorder?

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- You **do not** need an MRI or blood work to diagnose a primary headache disorder such as a migraine or tension type headache.





# What can my patient do about headaches at school?

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# What can my patient do about headaches at school?

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- For headaches at school, it is recommended to have rescue medications available
- You can provide a letter for school that will allow your patient accommodations and access to rescue medications as needed during the school day





# How do I know my patient does not have a brain tumor or aneurysm?

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## How do I know my patient does not have a brain tumor or aneurysm?

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- Take a detailed history and perform a neurologic examination
- Based on well establish data, if there are no "red flags" in your patient's history and the neurologic exam is normal, the chances of your patient having a brain tumor or aneurysm are **highly unlikely**





# Worrisome Headache Red Flags (SNOOP)

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# Worrisome Headache Red Flags (SNOOP)

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- **S**ystemic symptoms: fever, hypertension, weight changes or
- **S**econdary headache risk factors: HIV, systemic cancer or recent trauma
- **N**eurologic symptoms or abnormal signs: confusion, impaired alertness or consciousness
- **O**nset: sudden, abrupt or split-second
- **O**lder or other: new onset at age >50, young age
- **P**revious headache history or headache progression: first headache or different (change in attack frequency, severity or clinical features)





# THANK YOU!

For additional information, please visit our web page:

<https://www.choa.org/medical-professionals/referrals-and-transfers/directory-of-services/neurosciences-resources>

For specific questions regarding your patient, you may also call 404-785-DOCS (3627) and ask to speak with the on-call neurologist.

