



TIPS

for Coping With Headaches

Approximately 90% of the population suffers from headaches—the most common cause of absenteeism from work and school. The following tips will help you manage your headaches.

Pinpoint your headache triggers. Many factors (eg, certain foods or bright lights) can contribute to headaches. It can only help to identify headache triggers as you notice them. And, if possible, avoid these triggers in the future.

Jot down headache instances. When you have a headache, write down the day and time the pain began, how much you slept, how long the headache lasted, and what caused your headache to subside. Also include what you drank and ate over a 24-hour period, what you were doing, and where you were before the pain began.

Establish a regular sleep pattern. Regular sleep may improve headache symptoms. Therefore, it can be beneficial to have the same bedtime and wake time each day. Aim for an age-appropriate sleep length, which for adults ranges from seven to eight hours in bed. Younger people require additional hours of sleep.

Use biofeedback for headaches. Through biofeedback, people with headaches may learn to control body functions that were previously thought to be involuntary. By harness-

ing the power of your mind and by becoming aware of what is going on inside your body, you can gain more control over your headaches.

Avoid stressors. Take time to unwind and step away from stressful situations. Learn skills that can calm you, such as deep breathing techniques and progressive muscle-relaxation exercises.

Try to keep a daily routine. Eat snacks and meals at the same times during the day. Changes in your normal routine can cause the onset of headaches.

Meditate as needed. By meditating, you also may alleviate headaches. In addition, the Eastern practice of mindful meditation can offer help for people with anxiety, depression, and pain.

Reach out to a medical professional. It is important to know when to seek medical attention. If you are experiencing the worst headache of your life, go to a hospital emergency room or dial 911 as this symptom may indicate a very serious medical condition.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

Tips for Patients are available for download at www.neurologyreviews.com.