



Student Health Center

UNC Wilmington

INSTRUCTION SHEET: HEADACHE

The Student Health Provider has treated your headache. At present, no sign of a serious, life-threatening condition exists; further immediate testing or hospitalization is not necessary.

Please be aware that treatment of headaches at the Student Health Center is often temporizing: Pain is relieved, but the underlying cause of headaches is not defined or treated optimally. The causes of headache are numerous and varied; detailed evaluation and testing are often required to determine the source of headaches. In order to treat the cause of your headaches and prevent future headaches, follow-up with your personal/referral doctor is essential.

Please understand also that repeated the Student Health Center visits to treat the pain but not the cause of headaches is inadequate medical care. If you are having headaches severe enough to seek urgent treatment, careful evaluation and management by your personal/referral doctor is needed.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR HEADACHE:

- 1- Go home and rest in a dark room. Avoid any strenuous activity the next 24 hours.
- 2- Application of a cold pack to the forehead often helps relieve headache.
- 3- Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve discomfort, especially if taken early in the course of a headache. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
- 4- Avoid stress and emotional upset. Many headaches are caused or increased by stress. Stress increases tension in the neck muscles. Heat applied to the muscles in the back of the neck helps relieve spasm; gentle massage of the muscles can also alleviate tightness in the neck muscles.
- 5- Make a prompt follow-up appointment with your family/referral doctor. Ongoing care and evaluation of your headaches is essential.
- 6- Should your condition worsen, go promptly to the nearest emergency department for reevaluation. Specifically, seek care for: a severe and incapacitating headache, fever, rash, stiff and painful neck, persistent vomiting, paralysis (inability to move an arm or leg), or a seizure.