

Tension Type Headaches

Tension type headaches are one of the most common forms of headaches yet they are not well understood. Most people describe having a band of pressure around their head that can last from 30 minutes to a week. The best way to combat tension headaches is through lifestyle changes. Here are some helpful tips:

Exercise regularly: This can help reduce the frequency and intensity of headaches. Exercise relieves stress, relaxes your muscles and increases the levels of endorphins, which are your body's natural stress relievers.

Healthy lifestyle: Behaviors that promote general good health may help prevent headaches. This includes following regular eating and sleeping schedules and avoiding excess caffeine.

Stress management: Stress is a commonly reported trigger for tension type headaches. Reduce stress in your life by organizing your day ahead of time. Try relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, yoga and meditation.

Muscle relaxation: Muscle tension is associated with tension headache. Applying heat or ice to sore muscles in the shoulders and the back of the neck may ease the tension. Massage is another way to relieve muscle tension. Gently massage the muscles of your head, neck and shoulders with your fingertips. Or have someone else do the massage for you.

Perfecting your posture: Good posture can help keep your muscles from tensing up and reduces strain on your body. To attempt to correct faulty posture, try the military posture and then back off 10%. When standing, flatten your lower back against a wall, roll your shoulders back and down and tuck in your chin while you push your head backward. Forward head posture along with a slump posture can bring early fatigue/tension to your neck and upper back. Most importantly, try to avoid sitting, standing or working in one position for long periods.

Be sure to tell your health provider if you've noticed any changes in your usual headaches or if your headaches begin to worry you.