

# HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter  
[www.astate.edu/conhp](http://www.astate.edu/conhp)



## Tension, Cluster, Sinus, or Migraine?

### Overview

A headache (pain in the head, scalp, or neck) has the potential to be a debilitating and frequent occurrence. The problem with headaches is that they are not created equal. They vary in symptoms, frequency, and severity, which leaves many wondering if their headache is normal. Below are a few of the most common types of headaches and their presentations.

### Tension-Type Headache (TTH)

Tension-type headache, also referred to as a “stress headache”, is the most common form of headache. According to World Health Organization and International Headache Society, 78% of the population experience TTH. It was previously believed that these headaches were caused by emotion, but current studies suggest a strong physical cause.

### • Symptoms

- Headache that lasts from 30 minutes to 7 days
- Pain described as a “band around the head”
- Not accompanied by nausea or vomiting
- May have increased sensitivity to light or sound

### • Diagnostic Criteria

- Has at least two of the following
  - Mild to moderate intensity
  - Pain on both sides of the head
  - Not made worse by routine activities (climbing stairs, bending over)
  - Pain is “pressing” or “tightening”, not “throbbing” or “pulsing”

### Cluster Headache

Cluster headaches are thought to be the most painful form of headache. They have been described as “burning” or a “hot poker in the eye.”

### • Symptoms

- Average of about 2 per day for 4-6 weeks and then disappearing for 6-12 months
- Pain is severe, on one side of the head, and around the eye and temple area

### • Diagnostic Criteria

- 5 headache attacks with the following criteria
  - Severe pain as described above (lasting 15-180 minutes)
- Headache accompanied by at least one of the following:
  - Red eye or tearing on the side of the headache
  - Nasal congestion or runny nose on the side of the headache
  - Eyelid swelling on the side of the headache
  - Forehead and facial sweating on

- the side of the headache
- Small pupil or eyelid droop on the side of the headache
- A sense of restlessness or agitation

### **Sinus & Migraine Headache**

Sinus and migraine headaches are grouped together because migraine is commonly misdiagnosed as a sinus headache. Sinus headache is a common complaint, but is actually a very rare form of headache. A true sinus headache, also called rhinosinusitis, is secondary to a viral or bacterial sinus infection. This headache is characterized by a thick and discolored nasal discharge, fever, and facial pain.

#### **Migraine**

Migraine is a common genetic neurologic disorder that is very disabling to sufferers. The World Health Organization ranked migraine as number 19 for diseases that cause disability. There are two types of migraines: migraines with aura (MWA), and migraines without aura (MWOA).

#### **Migraines without aura (most common)**

- Three phases of MWOA
  - Prodrome Phase (preheadache)
    - May be experienced days or hours before attack
    - Symptoms may include:

- Food cravings
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Mood changes
- Yawning
- Fatigue
- Muscle stiffness
- Neck pain
- The Headache Phase
  - Most debilitating
  - Symptoms may include:
    - Mild to severe pain
    - Pain is most often on one side of head, but can shift to both sides
    - Pain in the eyes, sinuses, and jaw
    - Sensitivity to sound, light, and odors
    - Neck pain
    - Dizziness
    - Hot flashes
    - Confusion
    - Dehydration
    - Depression
    - Anxiety
- Postdrome Phase (post headache)
  - Symptoms may include:
    - Feeling “zombie” like
    - Lowered mood levels or feelings of euphoria
    - Fatigue
    - Poor concentration
    - Lowered intellect levels

#### **Migraines with aura**

The main difference with MWA is the addition of the “aura phase”, which precedes

the headache phase. Approximately 25% of migraine sufferers experience aura.

- Symptoms of the aura phase
  - Visual: flashy lights, wavy lights, partial loss of sight, blurry vision
  - Olfactory hallucinations: smelling things that aren’t there
  - Tingling or numbness in face or extremities
  - Decrease in hearing
  - Partial weakness
  - Reduced sensation
  - Hypersensitivity to feel and touch

#### **Reference**

[www.americanmigrainefoundation.org](http://www.americanmigrainefoundation.org)

#### **Next Issue: Headache Mitigation**

#### **Other News:**

\*\*If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at [hanrahan@astate.edu](mailto:hanrahan@astate.edu).

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