



Education

Headaches and Eye Problems

Do eye problems cause headaches?

Headaches are a very common health problem. They can have many different causes. Sometimes, but not usually, eye problems are a cause.

What causes headaches?

The most common cause of headaches is scalp and neck muscle contraction. Tension, anxiety, strain, stress, fatigue, and depression may all bring about sudden or gradual muscle contraction and pain.

Migraine headaches are another common type of headache. Migraines are usually much more severe than muscle contraction headaches. They are caused by changes in the blood vessels and blood flow in the head.

Headaches can also be caused by many diseases and disorders affecting other parts of the body. For example, ear problems, jaw problems, sinus problems, arthritis, high blood pressure, nerve diseases, blood vessel disease, and even tumors and aneurysms can cause headaches.

Rarely, eye problems cause headaches. For example, if you need reading glasses and read for a long time without glasses or with glasses that are too weak you may develop eye strain and a headache. Also, you may have a headache from reading or doing close work if your eyes are misaligned. That is, certain eye muscles may be too weak to align the eyes up close. This weakness is one of the few eye problems that can sometimes be treated with eye muscle exercises.

Some serious diseases of the eye can cause a headache along with eye pain. Very high eye pressure or sudden inflammation in the eye can cause headaches with eye pain.

How are headaches treated?

Treatment for headaches varies, depending on the cause. Proper diagnosis is important, so tell your health care provider if you have severe, frequent, or ongoing headaches. He or she will try to determine the cause and proper treatment.

If it appears that your headaches are caused by eye problems, you may be referred to an eye doctor. A new glasses prescription may be the treatment you need. If your eyes are misaligned, eye muscle exercises can sometimes be helpful.

If you have a severe headache along with a droopy eyelid and sometimes double vision, it could be a sign of a rare, but very serious condition that could be life threatening. You should get medical care right away.

How can I help prevent headaches caused by eye problems?

Make sure you have regular checkups with your eye doctor.

Adult Health Advisor 2006.4; Copyright © 2006 McKesson Corporation and/or one of its subsidiaries. All Rights Reserved. Developed by McKesson Provider Technologies. This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.
