



## Symptoms

# Headache

By Mayo Clinic Staff

Headache is pain in any region of the head. Headaches may occur on one or both sides of the head, be isolated to a certain location, radiate across the head from one point, or have a vise-like quality. A headache may be a sharp pain, throbbing sensation or dull ache. Headaches may appear gradually or suddenly, and they may last less than an hour or for several days.

### Seek emergency care

A headache can be a symptom of a serious condition, such as a stroke, meningitis or encephalitis. Go to a hospital emergency room or call 911 or your local emergency number if you have the worst headache of your life, a sudden, severe headache or a headache accompanied by:

- Confusion or trouble understanding speech
- Fainting
- High fever, greater than 102 F to 104 F (39 C to 40 C)
- Numbness, weakness or paralysis on one side of your body
- Stiff neck
- Trouble seeing
- Trouble speaking
- Trouble walking
- Nausea or vomiting (if not clearly related to the flu or a hangover)

### Schedule a doctor's visit

See a doctor if you experience headaches that:

- Occur more frequently than usual
- Are more severe than usual
- Worsen or don't improve with appropriate use of over-the-counter drugs
- Prevent you from working, sleeping or participating in normal activities

- Cause you distress, and you would like to find treatment options that enable you to control them better

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June 04, 2013

Original article: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/headache/basics/definition/sym-20050800>

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