



Headaches

A Headache is defined as a pain in the head or upper neck. It is one of the most common locations of pain in the body and has many causes.

How are headaches classified?

Headaches have numerous causes, and in 2007 the International Headache Society agreed upon an updated classification system for headache. Because so many people suffer from headaches and because treatment sometimes is difficult, it is hoped that the new classification system will allow health care practitioners come to a specific diagnosis as to the type of headache and to provide better and more effective treatment.

There are three major categories of headaches:

1. primary headaches,
2. secondary headaches, and
3. cranial neuralgias, facial pain, and other headaches

What are primary headaches?

Primary headaches include migraine, tension, and cluster headaches, as well as a variety of other less common types of headache.

- **Tension headaches** are the most common type of primary headache. Up to 90% of adults have had or will have tension headaches. Tension headaches occur more commonly among women than men.
- **Migraine headaches** are the second most common type of primary headache. An estimated 28 million people in the United States (about 12% of the population) will experience a migraine headache. Migraine headaches affect children as well as adults. Before puberty, boys and girls are affected equally by migraine headaches, but after puberty, more women than men are affected. It is estimated that 6% of men and up to 18% of women will experience a migraine headache in their lifetime.

- **Cluster headaches** are a rare type of primary headache affecting 0.1% of the population (1 in a 1,000 people). It more commonly affects men in their late 20s though women and children can also suffer these types of headache.
- Primary headaches can affect the quality of life. Some people have occasional headaches that resolve quickly while others are debilitated. While these headaches are not life-threatening, they may be associated with symptoms that can mimic strokes or intracerebral bleeding.

For more information see <http://www.medicinenet.com/headache/article.htm>

