

## What Else Can I Do to Ease the Pain of Primary Headache?

### Tension-type headache

“Besides taking medicine, other things you can do to ease the pain of a tension-type headache include the following:

- Put a heat pack or an ice pack on your head or neck.
- Take a hot shower.
- Get enough rest or sleep.
- Take time away from things that are stressful. This could mean doing anything from taking a brief walk to going on a long vacation.
- Get regular exercise of all types. Work up to exercising for 30-60 minutes, 4-6 times a week.”<sup>1</sup>



### Migraine headache

When migraine headache pain strikes, try the following:

- Lie down in a dark, quiet room.
- Put a cold compress or rag over your forehead.
- Massage your scalp, using a lot of pressure.
- Put pressure on your temples.<sup>2</sup>

### Cluster headache

To help prevent headaches once a cluster period has started:

- Keep to your usual routine; remain calm, and avoid changing your sleep pattern. Once a cluster period has started, a change in sleep pattern – particularly taking an afternoon nap – seems to bring on the headaches.<sup>3</sup>
- Avoid alcohol. Drinking alcohol can bring on headaches during cluster periods, and it happens

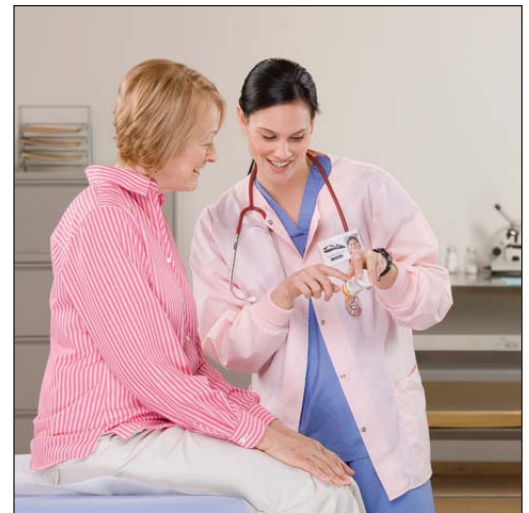
very quickly – before you finish the first drink. Alcohol should be completely avoided until the cluster period is over.<sup>3</sup>

- [Reduce stress](#) as much as possible. Stress may bring on attacks, and the headaches may start when you are relaxing after a stressful time.
- Be prepared with medication. “Medicines taken by mouth work too slowly to give relief for cluster headaches. For this reason, your doctor may prescribe a medicine that is taken by inhaler, as an injection (a ‘shot’), or as a rectal suppository. Other treatments that work for some people are rapidly breathing pure oxygen through a mask or using a local anesthetic (numbing medicine) in their nose.”<sup>3</sup>

“Your doctor will probably prescribe two medicines. One medicine is taken regularly during a cluster period to reduce the number of headaches. For the medicine to work, the level of the drug in your blood must be high at the time your attacks usually start. The second medicine is taken to

relieve the pain when a cluster headache occurs. Attacks begin too quickly for you to reach medical help. You must be ready to

take this medicine as soon as an attack begins. You may want to teach family members about your headaches and medicines so that they will be able to help you when you have an attack.”<sup>3</sup>



**Source:**

1. American Academy of Family Physicians (2007). Tension headaches [on-line]. Retrieved April 16, 2009. From <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/brain/disorders/172.html>.
2. American Academy of Family Physicians (2007). Migraine headaches: Ways to deal with the pain [on-line]. Retrieved April 16, 2009. From <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/brain/disorders/127.html>.
3. American Academy of Family Physicians (2006). Cluster headaches [on-line]. Retrieved April 16, 2009. From <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/common/brain/disorders/035.html>.