

Headaches

Overview

Headaches may occur for any number of reasons including: sinus conditions, hypertension, allergies, tumors, hormonal changes, and most frequently, stress. They are not usually associated with problems related to the eyes.

Migraine headaches

Migraine, a type of headache that is often hereditary, usually first surfaces between the ages of 15 and 30. They are most common among women and are thought to be related to stress and some foods.

Migraine headaches may cause visual symptoms such as **light flashes**, temporary blind spots, and blurred vision. Migraines are thought to be caused by the dilation and constriction of arteries in the head. These headaches can be extremely painful. The pain is often limited to one side of the head, and may be accompanied by nausea and vomiting.

In many cases, migraines are believed to be brought on by stress. This "Friday night" headache often follows the stress relief of a frenetic week during which the blood vessels in the head relax and constrict. Certain foods and additives such as chocolate, alcohol, dairy, and MSG are also attributed to migraines. However, for many, the cause is variable and extremely difficult to pinpoint.

Eye-related headaches

Eye-related headaches typically occur after extended periods of reading, watching television, **computer work**, or other close work that requires intense concentration. This type of headache usually disappears after a period of rest. In some cases, headaches may be caused by eyestrain related to eyeglasses. A tendency for the eyes to cross or drift outward may also bring on headaches.

One eye problem known to cause an intense headache is **angle-closure glaucoma**. With this type of glaucoma, the headache is only part of the problem. Patients suffering from an angle-closure attack also may experience nausea, intense pain around the eye, blurred vision, and haloes around lights.

Headaches caused by eye disease are unique in their symptoms and types of pain. It is important to make detailed notes of your symptoms, type of pain, lifestyle and what you were doing when the headache began. This information is very helpful to the physician to diagnose the type and cause of the headache you are experiencing.

Signs and Symptoms

The symptoms from headaches can be extremely variable and depend on the underlying problem. Because of the scope of the various types and causes is so

immense, the following the headaches are described with the typical symptoms as they relate to the eye.

Headaches related to eye fatigue:

- Headaches that begin after an extended period of reading, computer use, watching television, or close work
- Burning eyes
- Fatigue

Migraines

- Throbbing pain
- Sensitivity to light and sound
- Nausea and vomiting
- Visual "aura" including: light flashes, jagged lights, missing areas of vision

Acute angle-closure glaucoma

- Intense headache that is usually centralized over brow area
- Nausea and vomiting
- Glare or haloes around lights

Detection and Diagnosis

Your doctor will routinely obtain a complete history and perform a thorough physical exam to rule out systemic causes of the headache. Your ophthalmologist will verify that no eye-related problems are bringing on the headache.

Treatment

Stress relief, control of blood pressure, or medication to maintain appropriate hormonal levels may be necessary. New glasses or different work lighting may be prescribed by your doctor.

If you have persistent headaches, it is important to consult your medical doctor about them for a medical evaluation.