

Chronic Daily Headache

What are chronic daily headaches?

Most people have headaches at some point in their lives. A chronic daily headache is a headache that lasts a long time, usually at least 15 days each month for three months or more.

Who gets them?

Chronic daily headaches are more common in whites and in women. Other risk factors are obesity, taking too much medicine, stress, snoring, drinking too much caffeine, and other causes of chronic pain.

Are they life-threatening?

Chronic daily headaches usually are not life-threatening. Sometimes they are caused by pressure or bleeding in the brain, but this is rare. Your doctor will order tests if he or she thinks you have an infection or problems in the bone, muscle, or tissue. Usually tests are not needed to find out the type of the headache.

How are they treated?

Headaches often last longer when people take too much medicine to treat them. This can

happen with over-the-counter medicine, such as acetaminophen (one brand: Tylenol), or with prescription medicine. Your doctor may suggest taking less medicine, stopping a medicine completely, or trying a medicine that keeps the headaches from coming back. This may include taking medicines such as antidepressants, anticonvulsants, or muscle relaxants. Other treatments include cognitive behavior therapy, relaxation techniques, and acupuncture.

Will they go away?

It is rare that any single medicine or therapy will completely stop chronic daily headaches. Check with your doctor to see which therapies or combination of therapies will work best for you.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

National Headache Foundation

<http://www.headaches.org>

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This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

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