

# What Do I Do When I Get a Headache?

## START HERE



Start of headache or aura occurs.

## STEP 1



Immediately take pain medicine (checked below) + sports drink (gone within 30 minutes) + eat a snack, if possible.

## RESOLVED



Headache pain all the way gone or, if chronic, back to baseline.



Headache pain is better (not gone or back to baseline), unchanged, or worse 3–4 hours later.

## STEP 2



Repeat Step 1:  
- take pain medicine  
- sports drink  
- eat a snack

## RESOLVED



Headache pain all the way gone or, if chronic, back to baseline.



Headache pain is better (not gone or back to baseline), unchanged, or worse 3–4 hours later.

## STEP 3



Call your doctor for more instructions. If your doctor isn't able to see you, go to the Emergency Department.

## WHEN TO GET MORE HELP

- **Call your doctor if:**  
Your headache is much worse or lasting longer than usual.
- **Go to the Emergency Department if:**  
You have new or very different symptoms, such as not able to see, not able to move one side of your face or body, trouble walking or talking, confusion, or not able to respond.

## YOUR PAIN MEDICINE

- Ibuprofen \_\_\_\_\_ mg
- Naproxen \_\_\_\_\_ mg

## SPORTS DRINK

- 12–16 oz.
- 16–24 oz.
- 24–32 oz.

\*See other side for important notes

## IMPORTANT NOTES

- 1 treatment = 1 or 2 doses of pain medicine in 1 day.
- You may have up to 3 treatments in 1 week. Do not treat on back-to-back days.
- If your headache returns the next day, and you've already treated with 2 doses of pain medicine, call your doctor. If your doctor isn't able to see you, go to the Emergency Department.
- Make a follow-up appointment if you need to keep using 2 doses of medication to completely get rid of your headache.
- Our goal: Complete resolution of your headache, or if chronic, return to baseline 100% of the time.



## HEALTHY HABITS

- **S: Sleep**- Maintain a regular 8-10 hour sleep schedule every night, even on weekends.
- **M: Meals/Fluids**- Eat a healthy diet and avoid skipping meals. Drink plenty of caffeine-free fluids each day. Bring water to school along with a snack in case you get hungry.
- **A: Activity**- Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity 3-4 days a week.
- **R: Relaxation**- Manage stress and anxiety. Practicing deep breathing, focusing your mind on a relaxing image, listening to soft sounds and reading a book are some ways to reduce stress.
- **T: Triggers/Treat Early**- Treat headaches early when symptoms begin. Identify and manage stressors that trigger your headaches.



If you have questions or concerns, call your doctor:

**Cincinnati Children's Headache Center:**  
513-636-4222

**For more information, visit:**  
[cincinnatichildrens.org/headache-center](http://cincinnatichildrens.org/headache-center)

