Heads up – it’s time to get to grips with headaches

# Teacher Guidance:

This guidance has been written to accompany two lessons exploring headaches in young people. The lessons aim to raise awareness of the impact of headaches on students’ wellbeing and success in school. They aim to equip students with the knowledge to tackle headaches and get the targeted help that they need. One lesson has been designed for Key Stage 3 which focuses on what impact our choices have on our heads and how to help ourselves when we experience headache. The Key Stage 4 lesson reviews this material and extends student learning about the impact of headaches and develops students understanding about the link between physical and mental health, the links between stress and physiological symptoms and how to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. Teachers are expected to read the guidance first before delivering the lessons.

# Links to PSHE Association schemes and the RSHE Guidance

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| **KS3 Lesson** | |
| **RSHE Guidance** |
| Addressing the impact of headache  Types of headache and their management  Mental Wellbeing  Common types of mental ill health (e.g. anxiety and depression)  the benefits and importance of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation and voluntary and service-based activities on mental wellbeing and happiness | |
| Physical health and fitness  the positive associations between physical activity and promotion of mental wellbeing, including as an approach to combat stress.  the characteristics and evidence of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, maintaining a healthy weight, including the links between an inactive lifestyle and ill health. | |
| Healthy eating  how to maintain healthy eating and the links between a poor diet and health risks | |
| Drugs, alcohol and tobacco  awareness of the dangers of drugs which are prescribed but still present serious health risks. | |
| **KS3 Lesson** | |
| **PSHE Association POS** |
| H12. The importance of recognising and managing headache. The relationship with stress. How to recognise when they or others need help with their mental health and wellbeing; sources of help and support and strategies for accessing what they need | |
| H14. the benefits of physical activity and exercise for physical and mental health and wellbeing | |
| H15. the importance of sleep and strategies to maintain good quality sleep | |
| H16. to recognise and manage what influences their choices about physical activity | |
| H17. the role of a balanced diet as part of a healthy lifestyle and the impact of unhealthy food choices | |
| H21. how to access health services when appropriate | |
| H23. the positive and negative uses of drugs in society including the safe use of prescribed and over the counter medicines; responsible use of antibiotics | |

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| **KS4 Lesson** | |
| **RSHE Guidance** |
| Impact of headache  Relationship with mental health  Mental Wellbeing  common types of mental ill health (e.g. anxiety and depression) | |
| Physical health and fitness  the positive associations between physical activity and promotion of mental wellbeing, including as an approach to combat stress | |
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| Drugs, alcohol and tobacco  awareness of the dangers of drugs which are prescribed but still present serious health risks. | |
| **KS4 Lesson** | |
| **PSHE Association POS** |
| H8. To recognise the impact of headache and manage headache appropriately  to recognise warning signs of common mental and emotional health concerns (including stress, anxiety and depression), what might trigger them and what help or treatment is available | |
| H11. to make informed lifestyle choices regarding sleep, diet and exercise | |
| H12. the benefits of having a balanced approach to spending time online | |
| H13. to identify, evaluate and independently access reliable sources of information, advice and support for all aspects of physical and mental health | |
| H14. about the health services available to people; strategies to become a confident user of the NHS and other health services; to overcome potential concerns or barriers to seeking help | |

# Creating a safe learning environment

Creating a safe learning environment is crucial for fostering open communication and addressing sensitive topics, including head pain. Here's a breakdown of key considerations for teachers in approaching this subject:

### Establishing a Safe Space:

Teachers should cultivate a classroom atmosphere where students feel safe expressing their thoughts and concerns without fear of negative judgment. Emphasising respect and understanding promotes a culture of acceptance, making it easier for students to discuss potentially sensitive issues related to Headache.

### Acknowledging Potential Sensitivities:

Recognise that discussions about headaches may touch on aspects beyond students' control, such as environmental factors or personal health conditions. Being aware of these potential sensitivities allows teachers to approach the topic with empathy and understanding.

### Normalising Healthy Habits:

Shift the focus from the appearance of headaches to normalizing healthy habits that can alleviate or prevent them. Encourage discussions around routines that contribute to well-being, such as proper hydration, adequate sleep, and stress management. This approach helps minimise any potential stigma or insecurities related to experiencing headaches.

### Empowering Positive Change:

Frame lessons in a way that empowers students to make realistic and positive changes to manage their headaches. Provide practical tips on identifying triggers, practicing relaxation techniques, and seeking appropriate medical advice. By focusing on achievable steps, teachers can inspire confidence and agency in students to take proactive measures for their well-being.

### Respecting Diversity:

Acknowledge that students come from diverse backgrounds with varying health conditions. Be sensitive to individual experiences and be inclusive in your discussions about headaches, considering that factors contributing to headaches may differ among students. This ensures that lessons are relevant and respectful of each student's unique circumstances.

### Facilitating Open Discussions:

Teachers should be prepared to manage discussions on sensitive issues confidently. Encourage open dialogue by asking open-ended questions, actively listening to students' experiences, and fostering an environment where curiosity is welcomed. This approach allows for a more engaging and enriching learning experience when discussing headaches in the classroom.

In summary, fostering a safe and supportive learning environment, being aware of potential sensitivities, and focusing on empowering positive change can contribute to effective and respectful discussions on managing headaches in the classroom.

# Subject Knowledge:

Headache affects 20 to 30% of school children which impacts upon quality of life and school performance. The World Health Organisation ranks migraine as the third highest cause of disability in young people. Despite this, young people with headache rarely come forward to seek help and when they do their needs are poorly addressed. This project aims to raise the awareness of headache amongst students, staff and parents, and offers schools a range of simple interventions to address this important area.

Guidance for Teaching a Lesson about Preventing Headaches:

As you embark on the lesson about preventing headache, here are some valuable tips to share with your students. Empower them with practical strategies to minimize the occurrence of headaches and promote overall well-being:

**Prioritise Sleep:** Emphasize the importance of getting enough sleep and maintaining a regular sleep schedule. Encourage students to establish consistent bedtime routines that allow for adequate rest, contributing to better overall health.

**Stay Hydrated:** Highlight the significance of staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Dehydration can be a common trigger for headaches, and maintaining proper fluid intake is essential for overall health.

**Maintain a Healthy Diet:** Educate students on the impact of diet on their well-being. Emphasize the importance of eating a balanced and nutritious diet, avoiding the tendency to skip meals. Stable blood sugar levels contribute to headache prevention.

**Protect Against Bright Sunlight:** Advise students to wear sunglasses when outdoors in bright sunlight. Exposure to intense sunlight can be a headache trigger for some individuals, and protecting the eyes can help minimize this risk.

**Manage Stress:** Teach stress management techniques to help students cope with daily pressures. Techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga can be effective in reducing stress levels, a common contributor to headaches.

**Stay Physically Active:** Promote regular physical activity as an essential component of a healthy lifestyle. Engaging in exercise not only supports overall health but can also help alleviate tension and reduce the likelihood of headaches.

**Identify and Avoid Triggers:** Encourage students to identify their individual headache triggers. Whether it's specific foods, environmental factors, or other influences, understanding and avoiding these triggers can significantly impact headache prevention.

**Maintain Good Overall Health:** Reinforce the concept that a holistic approach to health contributes to headache prevention. Encourage students to make positive lifestyle choices, including adequate sleep, a balanced diet, regular exercise, and stress management.

Heads Up – KS3 Lesson

Objective: To educate students about headaches, their causes, and strategies for prevention and management.

We are learning about headaches, their causes, and what to do if you get them.

We will be able to:

* Discuss the common yet often misunderstood topic of headaches.
* Explain that headaches can affect anyone
* Understanding their causes
* Describe ways to manage them
* Understand the link between headache and wellbeing

# Introduction:

Today, we'll explore the common yet often misunderstood topic of headaches. Headaches can affect anyone, and understanding their causes and ways to manage them is crucial for overall well-being. We’ll also empower students to get help when needed.

# Starter: Baseline –Think Pair Share

Students are to begin thinking about this on their own – then share ideas with those around them. This slide could be printed off to enable annotation.

As this is the baseline assessment its important to keep language natural and allow students to share ideas freely

Use this activity to gauge students current understanding and adapt the lesson throughout to prior knowledge or understanding that the students may have/ need.

Highlight: Caffeine, Blue light and anxiety.

# Discuss: What is a Headache?

Begin by discussing what a headache is and the different types. Mention common types such as tension headaches, migraines, and cluster headaches. Emphasize that headaches are a symptom, not a disease.

# Discuss: Identifying Triggers- Causes of Headache:

Discuss how individuals may have different triggers for their headaches. Encourage students to reflect on their experiences and identify potential triggers for their own headaches.

Explore the various factors that can contribute to headaches:

* Stress
* Dehydration
* Lack of sleep
* Poor posture
* Eye strain
* Caffeine withdrawal
* Certain foods

The cause could also be more serious – head injury, tumour etc

# VIDEO – with accompanying question sheet/mind map

### **Task 1:** Head Pain Scenarios

1. What **might the cause of the pain be**?

2. What are the symptoms?

3. Where might they get **support** or **treatment?**

Use accompanying worksheet

### Task 2: Get help or help yourself?

Medicine Rest Help

Information 1: Head pain is more common in students who **skip breakfast**, **don’t drink enough water** and have **been bullied** in the past.

**Discussion:** Stigma

# **Activity 4: Prevention Strategies:** Introduce strategies to prevent headaches:

* Maintain a regular sleep schedule
* Stay hydrated
* Manage stress through relaxation techniques
* Practice good posture
* Take breaks from screens
* Maintain a healthy diet

# **Plenary 1: Coping Strategies:** Explore coping mechanisms for managing headaches:

* Deep breathing exercises
* Mindfulness and meditation
* Applying a cold or warm compress
* Taking short breaks to rest and relax
* Over-the-counter pain relievers (with caution and parental guidance)

**Plenary 2- Recognising Warning Signs:** Discuss warning signs that may indicate a more serious issue, such as chronic headaches or migraines. Encourage students to seek medical advice if they experience severe or persistent headaches.

**Sign posting**

**Key Words**

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Heads Up – KS4 Lesson

Stress, Mental Wellbeing, and Headaches

Objective

- To help students understand the connection between stress, mental wellbeing, and headaches.

- To identify causes, symptoms, and effective treatments for stress-related headaches.

- To provide practical stress management techniques and encourage healthy lifestyle choices.

Possible materials Needed:

- Whiteboard and markers

- Handouts with key points from the lesson

- Relaxation exercise script or audio

- Journals or notebooks for each student

- Timer for activities

**Lesson Plan**

1. Introduction (5 minutes) **Slides 3 and 4**

- Begin with a brief discussion on what stress is and ask students to share their thoughts.

- Define stress and introduce the types of stress (acute and chronic).

2. Understanding Stress (10 minutes) **Slide 5**

- Explain the impact of stress on mental health, including emotional and cognitive effects.

- Discuss the physical symptoms of stress, focusing on how the fight-or-flight response works.

3. Stress and Headaches (10 minutes) **Slide 6**

- Introduce the types of headaches linked to stress: tension headaches and migraines.

- Describe the symptoms of each type of headache.

- Use visual aids or diagrams to help explain the differences between tension headaches and migraines.

4. Causes of Stress and Headaches (10 minutes)

- Discuss common causes of stress, especially those relevant to teenagers (academic pressure, social issues, personal life).

- Explain how stress triggers headaches, focusing on muscle tension and hormonal changes.

5. Managing Stress and Preventing Headaches (15 minutes)

- Share healthy lifestyle choices that help manage stress and prevent headaches:

- Regular exercise

- Balanced diet

- Adequate sleep

- Introduce stress management techniques:

- Relaxation exercises (demonstrate or play a guided meditation)

- Time management tips

- Engaging in hobbies and interests

- Emphasize the importance of seeking help:

- Talking to someone they trust

- Seeking professional help if needed

6. Conclusion and Discussion (10 minutes)

- Summarise the key points of the lesson.

- Facilitate a discussion with the provided questions:

- What are some common causes of stress in your life?

- How do you usually manage stress? Are there any new techniques you would like to try?

- Have you ever experienced headaches related to stress? How did you handle them?

7. Activities (15 minutes)

Relaxation Exercise: Guide the students through a short meditation or deep breathing exercise. Use a calm, soothing voice and ensure a quiet environment.

Stress Journal: Distribute journals or notebooks and ask students to start a journal to track their stress levels and identify patterns or triggers.

Group Discussion: Organize small groups and have students share stress management tips and support each other in finding new ways to cope. Encourage them to be respectful and supportive.

Assessment

- Observe student participation and engagement during discussions and activities.

- Review the stress journals periodically to provide feedback and support.

- Conduct a follow-up discussion in the next class to see if students have implemented any new stress management techniques and how they are feeling.

Tips for Success

- Create a supportive and non-judgmental environment where students feel comfortable sharing their experiences.

- Use real-life examples to make the information relatable.

- Be mindful of students who may have significant stress or mental health issues and offer additional support as needed.

- Encourage open communication and remind students that it’s okay to ask for help.