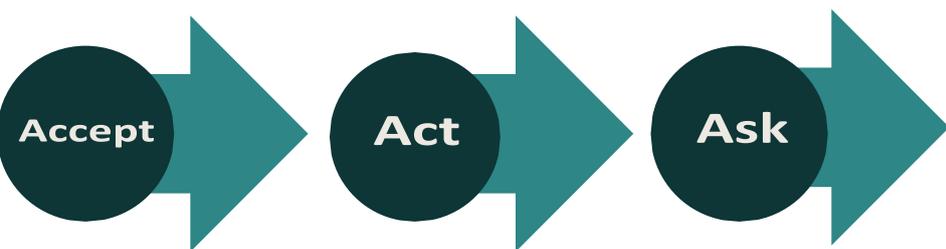


Heads up - It's time to get to grips with Headache in schools



Information for parents



Ted
Wragg
TRUST

Addressing the needs of young people with problematic headache

The “Heads Up” project seeks to raise the awareness of headache as a problem in young and reduce its impact within a school setting.

What is the extent of the problem?

- Headache is second in the world in terms of impact on wellbeing in the 10-24 year age group.
- Up to 30% of students have headache that impacts upon their quality of life and school performance.
- The needs of young people with headache are largely unmet.

What are the causes of headache?

Fortunately, serious causes of headache are very rare. Headache is predominately migraine (experienced by 11% of young people) or tension type headache (experienced by 17% of young people). See figure 1.

With tension headache the pain is usually dull and can be anywhere in the head. The length can vary between hours and days.

Migraine usually runs in families. The pain can be on one or both sides and usually last between one and 72 hours. It is more severe and associated with other problems such as feeling or being sick, not liking light or sound or movement or touch. Sometimes migraines are associated with an aura. These can last up to an hour and usually come before the headache. This is most experienced as a disturbance of vision. Auras are harmless but can be quite frightening. Migraine can also be associated with tummy pain which can occur when there is not a headache, particularly in younger children.

Some children can experience both types of headaches.

What can your child do if they have headache?

- Try and keep things constant. Of particular importance is regular hydration and to drink water regularly during the day. Meals shouldn't be skipped, particularly breakfast.
- Regular sleep patterns are important – go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Try to avoid too much screen time and certainly not within an hour of bedtime as this can disturb sleep.
- Eat healthily. Avoid fizzy drinks and drinks with artificial colouring. These can stimulate the brain and make headache more likely.
- A diary may be helpful to make a note of any headache triggers, particularly for migraine.
- Encourage plenty of exercise.
- Stress is an important factor in making headaches worse. Explore anything that your child may be worrying about.
- Simple painkillers can be important. Paracetamol or ibuprofen. Aspirin should not be used in children under 16. Paracetamol and ibuprofen work in different ways and can be taken together. Follow the dosage instructions on the label and read the information leaflets provided in the package. However, don't use painkillers on more than 15 days of the month as this can make your headache worse. Painkillers can be kept at school with your permission.
- Fortunately, serious causes of headache are very rare but some things to look out for are headache that is getting progressively worse or associated with new behavioural problems, headache that awakes at night, headache with coughing or straining, poor balance or co-ordination, abnormal eye movements or visual problems.
- If things are not moving forward or if you are concerned, see you GP for advice. Attached is a letter you can use when you visit your GP.
- Don't be afraid to ask for a specialist opinion if things are not improving.
- Consider asking school for a health care plan when headache remains a problem.

Further information

A video explaining headache can be found at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAUQX6hwKTw>

And a longer video on

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BR72YupDmh0>

The Migraine Trust is the patient's organisation which can offer useful advice and support.

<https://migrainetrust.org/>

Letter for parents to take to their GP.

NHS Exeter Headache Clinic

Dear Colleague,

We are undertaking a project in association with the Ted Wragg Academy Trust to address problematic headache in children. (www. ref) Studies we have undertaken show that up to 30% of school children will have problematic headache. Tension headache is the most common but 11% of children have migraine.

You can find some brief notes to support you in diagnosing and managing headache in children on www.nhs.uk.

I hope you find this helpful.

With best wishes,

David Kernick

General Practitioner with a special interest in headache.