

Have a Headache? You Are Not Alone

Information about headaches, from the mildly unpleasant to the extremely painful. Transcript of radio broadcast:
25 February 2008

Section A

VOICE ONE:

This is SCIENCE IN THE NEWS in VOA Special English.
I'm Barbara Klein.

VOICE TWO:

On SCIENCE IN THE NEWS: A guide to headaches
And I'm Bob Doughty. Today we tell about **headaches**,
the head **pain** that strikes almost everyone at some time.

(MUSIC)

VOICE ONE:

Have you had a headache recently? If your answer is yes,
you are like many millions of people **worldwide** who
experience pain in the head. The pain can be **temporary**,
mild and **cured** by a simple **painkiller** like aspirin. Or, it
can be severe.

The National Headache Foundation says more than forty
five million people in the United States **suffer chronic**
headaches. Such headaches cause severe pain that goes
away but returns later.

Vocabulary

Headache –

Pain in the head

Pain –

ache; soreness

Worldwide – Universal;
global; all around the
world

Experience –

Suffer; feel

Temporary –

Lasting for a short time.

Cure(d) –

Make someone healthy

Painkiller -

A drug that reduces pain.

Suffer –

Undergo; experience; go
through

Chronic –

Constant; never ending;
persistent

Section B

Some headaches may **prove** difficult and require time to **treat**. But many **experts** today are working toward cures or **major** help for chronic headaches.

VOICE TWO:

The US Headache **Consortium** is a group with seven member **organizations**. They are **attempting** to improve treatment of one kind of headache -- the **migraine**. Some people experience this kind of pain as often as two weeks every month. The National Headache **Foundation** says about seventy percent of migraine sufferers are women.

Some people **describe** the pain as similar to a **repeated** beat. Others **compare** it to someone driving a **sharp** object into the head. Migraine headaches cause Americans to miss more than one hundred fifty million workdays each year. A migraine can be **mild**. But it also can be so **severe** that a person cannot live a normal life.

VOICE ONE:

One migraine sufferer lives in Ellicott City, Maryland. Video producer Curtis Croley had head pain as a child. He does not know what kind of headaches they were. But when he suffered severe headaches as an adult, doctors **identified** the problem as migraine.

Vocabulary

Prove Show; confirm; verify

Treat - take care of; care for

Expert(s) - Specialist; professional

Major – Main; most important

Consortium – Group; association

Organization(s) – Business; company

Attempt (ing) – try

Migraine –A very strong, painful headache

Foundation – Organization, company

Describe –Explain

Repeat(ed) – do again

Compare – Balance; contrast; put side by side to see the difference

Sharp –With an edge that can cut things

Mild – gentle -

Severe –Harsh; acute; felt very much

Identify (ied) –

Recognize; make well known

Section C

Today, Mister Croley says months can **pass** without a headache. But then he will have three migraines within a month. If he takes the **medicine** his doctor **ordered** early in his headache, it **controls** the pain. If not, the pain in his head becomes **extremely** bad. Sometimes he has had to be treated with a **combination** of drugs in a hospital.

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(MUSIC)

VOICE TWO:

Some people take medicine every day to **prevent** or **ease** migraine headaches. Others use medicine to control pain already **developed**. Doctors treating migraine sufferers often order medicines from a group of drugs known as triptans.

Most migraines **react** at least partly to existing medicine. And most people can use existing medicine without experiencing bad effects. Doctors sometimes use caffeine to treat migraine headaches. Interestingly, caffeine also can cause some migraines.

VOICE ONE:

Medical experts have long recognized the work of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. The Mayo Clinic says several foods are suspected of causing migraines. Cheese and alcoholic drinks are among them. Food additives like nitrates and monosodium glutamate also are suspected causes.

Vocabulary

Pass - go by

Medicine - drug

Order(ed) - Arrange; organize

Controls - Manage; be in control of

Extremely - Very; really

Combination –

Grouping; mixture

Prevent – Stop; avoid

Ease - Relieve; reduce

Develop(ed) - build up

React - act in response to

Section D:

The Mayo Clinic tells **patients** to avoid strong smells that have **seemingly** started migraines in the past. Some people react badly to products like perfume, even if they have a **pleasant** smell.

The Clinic's experts say **aerobic** exercise can help migraine sufferers. Aerobic exercise increases a person's heart rate. It can include walking, swimming or riding a bicycle. But a sudden start to hard exercise can cause headaches.

The experts advise that people should plan to exercise, eat and sleep at the same times each day.

VOICE TWO:

The Mayo Clinic has **advice** about **estrogen** for women who suffer from migraines. The female body makes estrogen. Drugs like **birth control pills** contain a **version** of this chemical.

Such medicines may produce headaches or cause them to **worsen**, the Clinic says. The same is true for estrogen **replacement** drugs for women. Doctors sometimes order estrogen replacement for women who no longer able to have children.

Vocabulary

Patient(s) – people needing medical care or treatment

Seemingly - Apparently; on the face of it

Pleasant – Enjoyable

Aerobic - Having or providing oxygen

Advice - Suggestion

Estrogen – Female hormone

Birth control pills – medicine taken to stop pregnancy

Version - Form; kind

Worsen - get worse; deteriorate

Replacement – substitute; alternate

Section E:

VOICE ONE:

The Clinic also says **hypnotherapy** might help **suppress** headaches. It says the method could **reduce** the number and severity of a patient's headaches. In hypnotherapy, willing people are placed in a condition that lets them receive suggestions. They look like they are sleeping. The suggestions they receive may be able to **direct** their whole mental energy against pain.

The Mayo Clinic says the **hypnotizer** can never control the person under hypnosis. It also says the hypnotized person will remember what happened during the treatment.

(MUSIC)

VOICE TWO:

More people suffer tension headaches than migraines. But most tension headaches are not as powerful.

Events that start tension headaches may include **emotional** pressure and the deeper than normal sadness called **depression**. Other tension headaches can start from something as simple as tiredness. Common changes in **atmospheric** conditions also can be responsible.

The Mayo Clinic says you may feel a tension headache as tightness in the skin around your eyes. Or, you may feel pressure around your head. **Episodic** tension headaches strike from time to time. Chronic tension headaches happen more often. A tension headache can last from a half hour to a whole week.

VOICE ONE:

The Mayo Clinic says the pain may come very early in the day. Other signs can include pain in the neck or the lower part of the head. Scientists are not sure what causes tension headaches. For years, researchers **blamed** muscle tension from tightening in the face, neck and the skin on top of the head. They believed emotional tension caused these movements.

Vocabulary

Hypnotherapy – treating illness by putting people into a sleep like state.

Suppress - hold back

Reduce - lessen

Direct - focus

Hypnotize (r) – put under someone's power

Emotion (al) – strong feelings

Depression - sadness

Atmosphere (ic) -

Environment;

surroundings

Episodic – Happening at irregular intervals

Blame(d) – Accuse; point the finger at; say it is someone's responsibility.

But that belief has been **disputed**. A test called an **electromyogram** shows that muscle tension does not increase in people with a tension headache. The test records electrical currents caused by muscle activity. Such research has caused the International Headache Society to re-name the tension headache. The group now calls it a tension-type headache.

VOICE TWO:

Some scientists now believe that tension headaches may result from changes among brain chemicals such as **serotonin**. The changes may start sending pain messages to the brain. These changes may **interfere** with brain activity that suppresses pain.

Medicines for tension headache can be as simple as aspirin or other painkillers. But if your pain is too severe, you will need a doctor's advice.

VOICE ONE:

A web site called Family Doctor dot org provides information from the American Academy of Family Physicians. The group suggests steps to ease or end a tension headache.

For example, it says putting heat or ice on your head or neck can help. So can standing under hot water while you are getting washed. The group also advises exercising often. Another idea is taking a holiday from work. But you had better ask your employer first.

(MUSIC)

Vocabulary

Dispute (d) - difference of opinion

Electromyogram – a test, which shows muscle tension

Serotonin – A chemical that constricts blood vessels and may affect emotional states.

Interfere - get in the way

VOICE TWO:

Ask anyone with a **cluster** headache, and they will tell you that the pain is terrible. The Cleveland Clinic Headache Center in Ohio says the cluster headache can be many times more intense than a migraine.

Cluster headaches usually strike young people. Smokers and persons who drink alcohol often get these headaches. Men are about six times more likely than women to have them. The Cleveland Clinic says this is especially true of younger men. Doctors say cluster headaches often strike during changes of season.

Cluster headache patients describe the pain as burning. The pain is almost always felt on one side of the face. It can last for up to ninety minutes. Then it stops. But it often starts again later the same day. Eighty to ninety percent of cluster headache patients have pain over a number of days to a whole year. Pain-free **periods** separate these periods.

VOICE ONE:

The Cleveland Clinic says the cause of cluster headaches is in a brain area known as a trigeminal-autonomic **reflex** pathway. When the nerve is made active, it starts pain linked to cluster headaches. The nerve starts a process that makes one eye watery and red.

Studies have shown that **activation** of the trigeminal nerve may come from a part of the brain called the **hypothalamus**. The Cleveland Clinic says injections of the drug sumatriptan can help. Many other drugs also could be used. For example, doctors say breathing oxygen also can help.

Thankfully, modern medicine has ways to treat almost all of our headaches.

(MUSIC)

Vocabulary

Cluster - Crowd together

Period (s) – Space of time

Reflex - Automatic response

Activate (ion) - Start

Hypothalamus – an area of the brain that controls temperature and hormone levels.

VOICE TWO:

This program was written by Jerilyn Watson and produced by Brianna Blake. I'm Bob Doughty.

VOICE ONE:

And I'm Barbara Klein. Read and listen to our programs at voaspecialenglish.com. Join us again next week for more news about science in Special English on the Voice of America.