

# FACT SHEET

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## Physical Changes After Brain Injury Headaches

### QUICK FACTS

- One of the most common and often persistent symptoms following a brain injury
- Long term headaches may be called post traumatic or post concussion headaches

### WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

#### Tension Headaches

- Affect the entire head, and may feel like pressure
- Can last from 30 minutes to 1 week

#### Cluster Headaches

- Limited to one side of the head
- Usually located around the eye
- Possible nasal congestion, tearing, and a red eye

#### Migraine Headaches

- Recurrent and pulsating
- Often affects only one half of the head
- Can last hours to 3 days
- Sometimes individuals see an “aura” before a migraine starts
- May include vomiting, and a sensitivity to light, sound, or smell

#### Musculoskeletal Headache

- Headaches worsen when bending over, stooping, or with exertion
- Common with whiplash
- May have dizziness, sensitivity to light and sound, imbalance

### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND COMPLICATIONS?

#### Possible causes:

- Muscle tension or spasms
- Injury to the brain such as a bruise (concussion) or laceration (tear)
- Nerve fibers of the brain being stretched or sheared from trauma
- Common triggers include: dehydration, irregular meals, caffeine and stress

#### Possible complications:

- Inability to tolerate light and noise making it difficult to participate in activities within or outside the home
- Depression and anxiety as a result ongoing headaches
- Difficulty sustaining attention, problem solving and may experience cognitive fatigue more quickly

### WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Promote good sleep and rest
- Move to a quiet and dark room
- Take breaks from demanding tasks (e.g. reading, group meetings)
- Plan and pace activities
- Take pain medication

*Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical doctor. Consult a health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatment.*