

Medicine Overuse Headaches

What is a medicine overuse headache?

Most often these headaches happen daily. It comes from the use of too much pain medicine. Pain medicines can be:

- Over-the-counter. The most common types are acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®).
- By prescription.

What causes it?

If pain medicine is taken every day or is used too often, they can make the headaches worse and harder to treat. If your child has had headaches for more than a few months, talk to your health care provider. They will want to know how much and how often your child has been taking the pain medicine.

What does it feel like?

The description and location of the pain in the head can be different for everyone. There is no stomach upset. It does not get worse with lights and noise. Over time, the pain may get worse, and the medicines used to treat them can stop working. Your child's health care provider will talk with you about ways to stop using pain medicines for these headaches. It may take weeks or months for this kind of headache to go away. As your child slowly stops taking the pain medicine, they may feel worse before starting to feel better.



ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.