Headache Flow Chart

Source: FamilyDoctor.com

1. Do you have a fever, cold symptoms, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea?

Yes

You may have the cold or the flu or gastroenteritis (stomach flu).

Get plenty of rest and drink plenty of fluids. Use over-the-counter medicine to relieve cold and flu symptoms and for diarrhea.

2. Do you have a severe headache, stiff neck, vomiting, and does normal light hurt your eyes?

Yes

You may have meningitis, a serious infection of the fluid around your brain and spinal cord, or intracranial hemorrhage, bleeding inside the brain.

See your doctor or go to the emergency room right away.

3. Have you injured your head or been knocked out recently?

Yes

You may have a concussion, or a subdural hematoma, a serious condition caused by blood pushing on your brain.

URGENT

See your doctor right away.

4. Do you have numbness, tingling or weakness in the arms and legs, or do you have trouble speaking or understanding speech?

Yes

You may be having a stroke.

See your doctor or go to the emergency room right away.

5. Do you have pressure around your eyes, or do you have congestion with yellowish-green nasal discharge and a fever?

Yes

You may have a sinus infection.

Treat fever, headache, and a sore throat with over-the-counter medicines, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen. An over-the-counter decongestant and saline nasal spray may help relieve other symptoms. See your doctor if the pain becomes severe or your fever persists.

6. Do you have mild to moderate pressure or tightening around your temples and does the pain occur during times of stress or after you have been sitting in one position for a long time?

Yes

You may have a tension headache.

Use over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, to relieve pain. Getting plenty of rest, taking a hot shower and applying ice packs to painful areas may also help.

7. Do you have intense throbbing pain, often with nausea or vomiting, and see flashing lights or spots before the headache?

Yes

You may suffer from migraine&nbsp;headaches.

See your doctor. He or she can diagnose your problem and may prescribe prescription medicine for migraines. In the meantime, use over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, to relieve pain. You can also rest in a dark room and apply ice packs and gentle pressure to painful areas.

8. Do your headaches occur after you read, watch TV, or use a computer?

Yes

Your headaches may be due to vision problems.

See an optometrist or ophthalmologist for an eye exam to see if you need glasses or contacts to correct your vision.

9. Do you get headaches and feel shaky and weak if you miss a meal?

Yes

Your headaches may be from hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar.

See your doctor. You can also try eating six small meals a day rather than three large meals. This may regulate your blood sugar.

10. Are you trying to cut down on caffeine, alcohol, or some other drug?

Yes

You may be suffering from withdrawal.

Use over-the-counter medicine, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, to relieve pain and discomfort. The symptoms should fade after a few days. Don't restart your habit.