







## Managing Your Child's Headaches: A Guide for Parents and Carers






At RCH's Children's Pain Management Clinic and Neurology Department, we focus on helping your child get back to daily life rather than just tracking headaches. Remember, chronic headaches can be annoying, but they aren't dangerous and will get better with the right treatment. Medications are only a short to medium term option, so here's how you can support your child:

<p><b>Parenting Tips</b></p> 	<p><b>Medication:</b> Make and stick to a plan with the doctor and avoid overusing medications.</p> <p><b>Screen time:</b> Limit time on video games and devices.</p> <p><b>Routine:</b> Encourage a regular routine with physical activity, sleep, and school. Know when your child needs rest and when to help them get back to daily activities.</p> <p><b>Wellbeing:</b> Promote your child's overall health and wellness.</p>
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### Key Tips for Managing Frequent or Chronic Headaches:

<p><b>Hydration</b></p> 	<p>Make sure your child drinks enough water, especially if they feel dizzy or lightheaded. Adding a little salt to their water might help (one teaspoon to a litre with their favourite flavour).</p>
<p><b>Diet</b></p> 	<p>A healthy diet is important. Skipping meals (especially breakfast) can make headaches worse. Make sure your child eats balanced meals with protein and carbohydrates. Watch out for foods that might trigger headaches, like caffeine, chocolate, citrus, or salty snacks.</p>
<p><b>Eye Check</b></p> 	<p>Make sure your child's eyes have been checked recently. Vision problems can sometimes cause headaches.</p>
<p><b>Identify Stress</b></p> 	<p>Stress is a major cause of headaches. Look for things that might be causing your child stress, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schoolwork</li> <li>• Problems with sleep</li> <li>• Friend or family issues</li> <li>• Bullying</li> </ul> <p>Some kids may not talk about stress at first but might open-up over time.</p>
<p><b>Mental Health</b></p> 	<p>If your child has anxiety, depression, or panic attacks, it's important to get help. These can make headaches worse. Seeing a psychologist can help your child learn ways to relax and manage anxiety and their headaches.</p>

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 <p><b>Medications And Supplements</b></p>	<p>Work with your doctor to decide when to use pain medications like ibuprofen, paracetamol, triptans or supplements, like magnesium or B vitamins.</p> <p>Be careful not to overuse medications, as this can make headaches worse.</p> <p>Your doctor might suggest prevention medicines like pizotifen, propranolol or amitriptyline to help manage frequent headaches.</p>
 <p><b>Sleep</b></p>	<p>Good sleep habits can help reduce headaches.</p> <p>Try to keep a regular sleep schedule and avoid naps during the day.</p>
 <p><b>Physical Activity</b></p>	<p>Start with light exercises, especially if your child hasn't been active.</p> <p>Gradually increase to 15–20 minutes of 'cardio' activity each day.</p> <p>Consider doing this as a family or involve your child's friends.</p> <p>Exercising outdoors in daylight is best.</p>
 <p><b>School Attendance</b></p>	<p>Help your child return to school and stay in touch with teachers.</p> <p>Decide when your child should stay in school and when they might need to come home.</p>
 <p><b>School Adjustments</b></p>	<p>If your child is struggling with schoolwork because of headaches, talk to the school about adjusting their workload or getting extra help.</p> <p>Make a plan with the school so your child can stay hydrated, have protein snacks, take breaks (have a pass card), have the option of going to a calm place and then getting back to the classroom.</p>

### Non-Medication Options

**1. Active Over Passive Strategies**

Shift from treatments like massage to active strategies like neck stretches and posture work. Aim for daily cardio exercise (15–20 minutes) and family activities, like walking together.

**2. Comfort Measures**

Use cold packs to help with headaches and warm packs for neck tension.

**3. Relaxation Techniques**

Help your child manage stress with relaxation exercises, yoga, or meditation. There are helpful apps like [Smiling Mind](#) and [Headspace](#) that offer guided meditations.