



## Impact of Episodic Headaches: Identifying Causes and its Classification

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### DESCRIPTION

Headaches are one of the most common neurological conditions in worldwide, impacting millions of people every day. Among the various types of headaches, episodic headaches are characterized by their occurrence on fewer than 15 days per month, in contrast to chronic headaches, which occur more frequently. Episodic headaches can range from mild discomfort to debilitating pain and can significantly impact a person's quality of life.

#### Types of episodic headaches

Episodic headaches are generally classified into several types based on their symptoms, duration and underlying causes. The most frequent forms are tension, migraine and cluster headaches. Tension-Type Headaches (TTH) is the most frequent category of episodic headache. They are frequently described as a tight band or pressure around the head, usually affecting both sides. The pain is typically mild to moderate and can last from 30 minutes to several hours. TTH can be triggered by stress, poor posture, or muscle tension in the neck and shoulders. Compared to migraines, tension headaches are not characterized by nausea, vomiting, or sensitivity to both light and sound. Migraines are a more severe type of episodic headache, characterized by intense, throbbing pain, usually on one side of the head. Migraines can last from a few hours to several days and are usually accompanied by symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to light, sound and smell.

Migraines can be further categorized into migraine with aura and migraine without aura. Aura refers to visual or sensory disturbances that occur before or during a migraine attack, such as flashing lights, blind spots, or tingling sensations in the limbs. Migraine triggers vary widely but frequently include hormonal changes, certain foods, stress, lack of sleep and environmental factors. Cluster headaches are the most painful and common types of episodic headache. They occur in clusters or cycles, with several attacks happening over weeks or months, followed by periods of remission. The pain is usually excruciating and

localized around one eye, frequently accompanied by redness, tearing, nasal congestion, and restlessness. Each incident endures between 15 minutes and three hours at the same time it can occur several times in a day. Cluster headaches are considered to be caused by abnormalities in the hypothalamus, the area of the brain that regulates biological rhythms.

#### Causes and triggers of episodic headaches

The causes of episodic headaches are multifactorial, involving a combination of genetic, environmental and lifestyle factors. Identifying these factors is essential for effective management and treatment. Genetic Predisposition plays a significant role in the development of certain types of headaches, particularly migraines. If both parents experience migraines, their children are more probable to experience migraines equally. This genetic predisposition influences the brain's sensitivity to triggers, such as hormonal fluctuations or environmental changes. Hormonal fluctuations, particularly in women, are a common trigger for episodic headaches, especially migraines. Many women experience migraines associated with their menstrual cycle, pregnancy, or menopause, frequently referred to as menstrual migraines.

Hormonal changes related to the use of oral contraceptives or hormone replacement therapy can also trigger headaches. Stress is a recognized for many forms of episodic headaches, including tension headaches and migraines. Stress can cause muscular tension, blood flow abnormalities, and brain chemical modifications, all of which can contribute to headaches. Emotional anxiety, tension and depression all have been associated to an increased frequency of headaches. Certain dietary foods and beverages have been demonstrated for causing headaches in susceptible individuals. Common dietary triggers include caffeine, alcohol (especially red wine), aged cheeses, processed meats and foods containing additives such as Monosodium Glutamate (MSG) and aspartame. Avoiding a meal or dieting can cause headaches due to low blood sugar levels.

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