



...Developing top-notch CNAs, one inservice at a time



A Disease Process Module for Nurse Aides:

All about Headaches



Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time



A Disease Process Module:

ALL ABOUT HEADACHES

We hope you enjoy this inservice, prepared by registered nurses especially for nursing assistants like you!

Instructions for the Learner

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask _____.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Keep the inservice information for yourself and turn in the quiz page to _____ no later than _____.
Show your Inservice Club Membership Card to _____ so that it can be initialed.
- Email In the Know at feedback@knowingmore.com with your comments and/or suggestions for improving this inservice.

THANK YOU!

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

Explain the difference between a primary and secondary headache.



Describe at least three common types of headaches.



Give at least five examples of possible headache triggers.



Observe your clients for symptoms related to headaches.



Help your clients follow their personal plan of care to prevent and/or manage the pain of headaches.



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A Disease Process Module: All About Headaches

A FIVE HOUR AFTERNOON NAP?

Gigi, an 86-year-old woman, had never had a problem with headaches in the past. She was fairly healthy and independent. She just needed some help with daily activities because she had advanced arthritis.

One morning, Gigi awoke with a minor headache. She did not tell the staff at the nursing home because she didn't think it was a very big deal. As the day wore on, the headache got worse and worse.

By two o'clock in the afternoon, the pain was so bad that Gigi asked Thomas, the CNA, to help her get into bed for a nap—where she slept for the next **five hours**.

The request to take a nap was not uncommon, so Thomas was not alarmed. However, when the nap lasted five hours, he knew something was wrong.

When Gigi woke up, Thomas began to ask some questions—and that was when he learned that Gigi was suffering from a headache.

Thomas took Gigi's vital signs and found that her temperature was elevated at 102.4. He notified the nurse immediately and Gigi's physician was called.

A few hours later, Gigi was diagnosed with a **sinus headache** caused by a **sinus infection**. The doctor ordered antibiotics and pain medication.

Fortunately for Gigi, the sinus infection was not serious. However, she did suffer needlessly when she failed to report her headache right away.

Other headaches that you'll learn about in this inservice may be caused by muscle tension, stress, hormones, stroke, head injuries, and even tumors.

While most headaches are not serious, the symptoms should never be ignored. Thomas did exactly the right thing when he dug deeper into why Gigi had napped for so long. He took quick action and reported the abnormal observations right away.

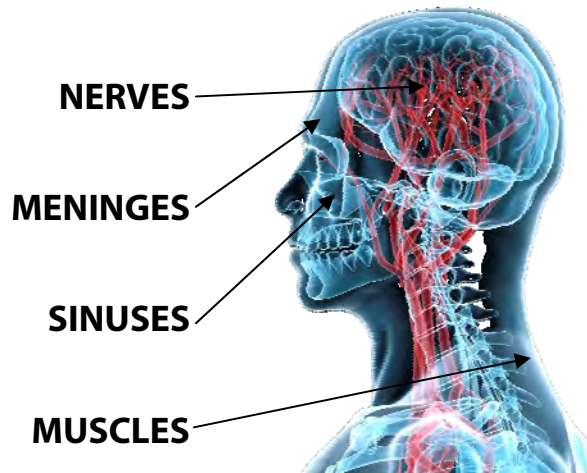
Keep reading to learn what the most common types of headaches feel like and how you can help your clients who are suffering from them.



WHAT EXACTLY IS A HEADACHE?

Headaches can be a serious condition that keeps people from carrying on with their daily lives, yet doctors are still not completely sure what exactly causes a headache.

A headache is a pain sensed in the nerves and muscles of the head and neck, as well as the meninges (a membrane that covers the brain and spinal cord).



Your brain itself cannot sense pain, so a headache has nothing to do with your brain hurting. It is really a pain somewhere *around* your brain, being picked up by nerve endings located in your head.

There are two main types of headaches: primary and secondary.



- **Primary headaches** are not associated with any underlying medical condition. The most common primary headaches are tension headaches (see page 3), migraines (see page 4), and cluster headaches (see page 5).
- **Secondary headaches** happen as a result of a medical condition like an infection, fever, head injury, low blood sugar, tumor, dental condition, or increased pressure in sinuses (known as a sinus headache).



The Facts

- There are at least 150 different types of headaches!
- Headaches are the #1 reason that people call in sick to work or school.
- While headaches can be uncomfortable, they are not usually dangerous. Most headaches can be cured by over-the-counter medications or by lying down in a darkened room.
- Thirty-seven million Americans suffer from migraines. Of these people, more than five million have several attacks per month.
- More women than men suffer from migraines. A quarter of the female population is affected while about eight in every hundred men report having migraine headaches.

WHAT'S NEW?

Grab your favorite highlighter! As you read this inservice, **highlight five things** you learn that you didn't know before. Share this new information with your co-workers!





TALK ABOUT IT!

If your client is suffering from tension headaches, you can help by talking about it! Ask:

- Are you worried about something that you'd like to talk about?
- Would a back rub or foot rub help?
- What types of things do you do to relax?
- Would you like me to help you find more information about meditation, Tai-chi, or yoga to help you with your tension?

If you feel your client is suffering from depression or anxiety, talk to your supervisor right away.

Symptoms may include: tearfulness, withdrawal, or a change in sleeping or eating habits

Help is available and your client does not need to suffer needlessly.

A CLOSER LOOK AT TENSION HEADACHES

The most common type of headache is the tension headache.

- Tension headaches usually result from a tightening of the muscles at the back of the neck, the face, and the scalp.
- At one time or another, more than 90% of Americans have had a tension headache.
- Tension headaches can become chronic, often occurring on a daily basis.

While tension headaches seem to occur randomly, they may be triggered by:

- Stress.
- Poor posture.
- Grinding of the teeth.
- Eye strain.
- Spinal arthritis.

WHAT DOES A TENSION HEADACHE FEEL LIKE?

Tension headaches tend to come on slowly. The pain is a steady, dull ache—on both sides of the head. Generally, the pain does not throb.

- The area around the temples may be tender.
- The muscles of the neck may feel tight or sore to the touch.
- The muscles of the jaw may ache.
- It may feel like the head is being squeezed in a vice.
- The pain may last for 30 minutes or up to a week.

Other symptoms of a tension headache include:

- Fatigue.
- Depression.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Anxiety.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Simple over the counter pain relievers are usually helpful. These include aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen sodium (Aleve).

Unfortunately, over time, pain relievers may lose their effectiveness and can even begin to cause headaches, known as "rebound" headaches.

Home remedies include rest (in a quiet room), cool compresses (over the forehead, face, or back of the neck), or a long, hot shower. All these non-drug remedies have the potential to relieve a tension headache.



A CLOSER LOOK AT MIGRAINES

The second most common type of headache is a migraine. You've probably heard someone describe a "classic" migraine headache.

- People who have "classic" migraines experience an "aura"—which is a warning sign that a migraine is about to begin. An aura may occur anywhere from 10 minutes to a few days prior to the onset of the headache. It generally fades away as the headache pain begins.
- Often, an aura involves a visual disturbance such as seeing colored lights, spots, zigzags, or blinking lights. An aura may also cause tunnel vision, tingling skin, dizziness, and confusion.
- The tendency to have migraines is probably passed down in families. Migraines may start in early childhood.
- At least 18% of Americans are affected by migraines. (Yet, because many people remain *undiagnosed*, doctors believe that as many as 50% of Americans may suffer from migraines.)

WHAT DOES A MIGRAINE FEEL LIKE?

The pain is intense and throbbing. Usually, it is felt on just one side of the head. Other symptoms include:

- Pain that lasts from four to 72 hours.
- Pain that worsens with physical activity.
- The scalp may be tender.
- Loss of appetite.
- Fatigue.
- Chills.
- Dizziness.
- Blurred vision.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Sensitivity to light, sound, or odors.
- Diarrhea and/or abdominal discomfort.
- Anxiety.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

People who suffer from migraines need to seek medical treatment. Medications that are most effective are available by prescription only. The most common prescription drugs for migraines are **preventative** treatments.

- Preventive medications are taken regularly, often on a daily basis, to reduce the severity or frequency of migraines.
- Some common medications include beta blockers (also for high blood pressure), antidepressants, anti-seizure drugs, and Botox.
- **Home remedies** include rest (in a dark, quiet room), and cool compresses. Encourage clients who suffer from migraines to get enough rest, to try meditation and yoga, and to keep a headache diary (see page 8).



WHAT EXCITES YOU?

HEADACHES GET A FACELIFT!

The FDA has approved the use of the anti-wrinkle treatment, Botox, as a cure for chronic migraine headaches.

Injections of Botox can reduce muscle tension, stop sensory nerves from carrying pain information, and reduce the release of migraine-causing chemicals.

People who suffer from chronic migraines can have trouble functioning in their daily lives. Their migraines can last for days.

The Botox injections, which last for around three months, are showing great success in people who suffer from pain for 15 or more days out of each month.



THE NEXT STEP!

You probably have clients who complain (loudly) about every little ache and pain, including headaches.

But, you also may have clients who “suffer in silence” when they have pain or a headache.

Oddly, clients who *complain* are in better shape because they get the treatment they need right away. Silent clients often suffer needlessly.

Think of three non-verbal signs that might tell you a client is suffering from headache pain.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How would you explain to a client and his or her family the importance of reporting headache pain?

A CLOSER LOOK AT CLUSTER HEADACHES

Cluster headaches are also known as “suicide” or “ice pick” headaches. They may be the most painful type of headache.

- Cluster headaches come on as a series of attacks. These attacks may persist for months at a time and then disappear for long periods.
- Cluster headaches can occur from one to eight times each day. Each headache lasts from 15 minutes to three hours.
- Cluster headaches are rare—affecting only 1% of Americans.
- About 85% of people with cluster headaches are men.



- For some reason, cluster headaches tend to occur in people with a similar appearance. The typical person with cluster headaches is a tall, muscular man with ruddy skin, hazel eyes, and a square chin.
 - Many people who suffer from cluster headaches have a history of heavy smoking and drinking.
- Unlike migraine sufferers (who often want to lie down in a dark room), people with cluster headaches tend to pace the floor, holding onto their faces in agony.

WHAT DO CLUSTER HEADACHES FEEL LIKE?

The pain arrives with no warning and is always on one side of the head, centered around the eye.

- One eye feels like it’s being poked with a red hot stick.
- The affected eye may become watery and bloodshot. The eyelid may look droopy and swollen and the pupil may be very small.
- The nostril on the affected side may become congested or runny.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- There's no cure for cluster headaches. The pain comes on suddenly and usually goes away quickly, before any over-the-counter pain relievers have a chance to do anything.
- Some people find that performing vigorous exercise at the first sign of an attack helps prevent or diminish the headache. Help your client take a walk or do some other physical exercise, if possible.
- Doctors believe that the major triggers for cluster headaches are alcohol and tobacco. Help you client cut down or quit drinking and/or smoking.



COMPARE AND REVIEW HEADACHES!



	TENSION HEADACHES	MIGRAINE HEADACHES	CLUSTER HEADACHES
Site	Across forehead, back of the head, or face.	Usually just on one side of the head.	Usually on one side, surrounding one eye.
Feeling	Constant squeezing pressure.	Throbbing pain.	Severe bone-crushing pain.
Frequency	Cycles for several years.	Periodic. Cycles over several months to years.	Attacks occur in clusters, up to three times a day over a period of 4 to 8 weeks.
Symptoms	Tender and stiff neck and shoulder muscles.	Nausea, vomiting, irritability, sweating, sensitivity to light.	Facial flushing, eye watering, and runny nose.



DID YOU KNOW?

- In long ago England, a headache cure involved drinking a mixture of seeds, pig brains, goat dung, and vinegar.
- Another early "cure" was to place headache sufferers on a centrifuge to drive blood from their heads to their feet.
- In the 1800s, many people became addicted to opium after using it frequently to treat their headaches.
- Other headache sufferers drank mixtures containing cocaine to relieve their pain. (In the old days, cocaine was thought to be so beneficial that it was part of the original formula for Coca Cola!)

STRANGE BUT TRUE HISTORY OF HEADACHE TREATMENTS!

- Headache treatments are discussed in ancient medical writings from 9000 years ago!



- The oldest known headache remedy was pretty awful! People had holes drilled in their skulls so that the demons causing the headache could escape.
- In ancient Egypt, they treated headaches by tying a clay crocodile to a person's head . . . and then praying.
- Some cultures believed that if a bird used a strand of someone's hair to build a nest, that person would develop a headache.



GET OUT!

THINK OUTSIDE OF THE BOX!

Working with clients in the home often requires coming up with creative solutions to uncommon problems.

- **THE PROBLEM:** You are caring for a 79-year-old man who has suffered from chronic headaches over the past few years. Doctors don't know what is causing his headaches and haven't figured out how to make them stop.
- You've noticed that your client seems more depressed lately and you are sure it's because he is discouraged and frustrated with these headaches.
- **WHAT YOU KNOW:** You know that depression is unhealthy. And, you know your client needs some relief from his pain.
- **GET CREATIVE:** What will you do? Think of three creative solutions to this problem.
- **TALK ABOUT IT:** Share your ideas with your co-workers and supervisor and find out how they would solve this problem.

OTHER TYPES OF HEADACHES

As you've read so far, there are over 150 different types of headaches. And, it's clear that different headaches produce different symptoms.

You are not expected to "diagnose" the type of headache your client might have. However, learning about the most common headaches will help you know what to watch for when a client complains of "an aching head."

- **MENSTRUAL MIGRAINES:** Hormone-related headaches, known as menstrual migraines, usually come on during the teenage years. These headaches get worse as women get older.

For many women, these migraines seem to hit a few days before their period—when the hormones in the body may be out of balance.

- **HEAD INJURY:** Injuries to the head, neck, and back can cause headaches that are often chronic.

Along with the pain, people may experience dizziness, ringing of the ears, blurred vision, depression, and difficulty sleeping.

- **REBOUND HEADACHE:** People who frequently use over-the-counter pain relievers to treat their headaches may be at risk for "rebound" headaches.

If taking a pain reliever brings on a worse headache, then it may be a rebound headache.

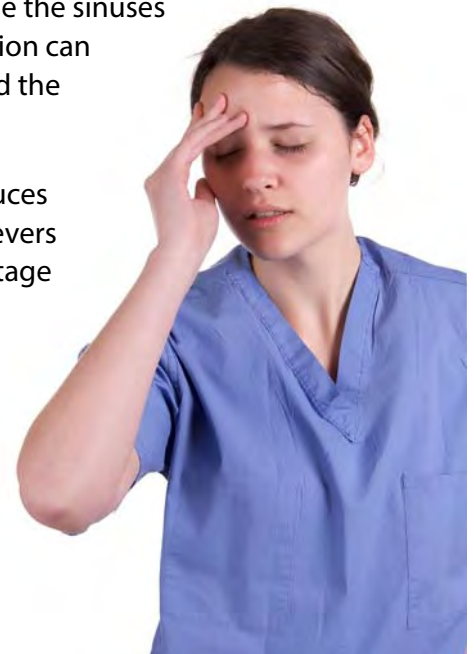
The pain is pressing, dull, and felt on both sides of the head. It may center on the front or top of the head.

- **SINUS HEADACHE:** People who have allergies are at risk for a sinus infection. This is when the tissues inside the sinuses may become inflamed. This inflammation can cause intense pressure and pain around the cheekbones and above the eyes.

- **CAFFEINE HEADACHES:** Caffeine reduces blood flow in the brain. Some pain relievers actually contain caffeine to take advantage of this effect.

People who drink caffeinated drinks every day, and then stop, can get an incredible headache because of the increased blood flow to the brain.

Caffeine headaches may cause moderate to severe pain, along with nausea, irritability, and depression.



FOODS THAT MAY TRIGGER HEADACHES

If you work with clients who get frequent headaches, watch to see if they get a headache after consuming:

- Alcoholic beverages.
- Aged cheeses.
- Smoked fish.
- Caffeine.
- Salty foods.
- Any pickled foods.
- Dairy products.
- Chocolate.
- Citrus fruits.
- Onions.
- Nuts and peanut butter.
- Dried beans.
- Fatty foods.
- Pizza.
- Sugary foods.
- Processed meats such as hot dogs and lunch meats.
- Monosodium glutamate (MSG).
- Artificial sweeteners like Nutrasweet and Equal.



TIME TO LAUGH!

FOLLOWING DOCTOR'S ORDERS

Bob says to his physician, "Hey, Doc! I've been getting these migraines for a long time now! I can't think straight! I need help!"

The doctor says, "You know, I have the same problem. But, whenever I get a migraine, I go home to my wife. She cooks my favorite meal, runs a warm bath and rubs my feet. It's great! It works every time!"

A week later, Bob returns to the office and says, "Hey doc! Thanks for the advice. It worked!"

The doctor says, "Oh really? That's good to hear!"

"Oh by the way," says Bob, "You've got a great house!"



ACTIVITY-RELATED HEADACHE TRIGGERS

Make note if your clients complain of a headache after they:

- Exercise.
- Skip a meal.
- Smoke a cigarette.
- Get too much or too little sleep.
- Have sexual relations.
- Experience a great deal of stress.
- Spend lots of time outside in sunshine.

OTHER POSSIBLE HEADACHE TRIGGERS

You might notice that your clients' headaches are triggered by:

- Hormonal changes.
- Bright or flickering lights.
- Strong perfumes.
- Chemical smells.
- Certain medications (nitroglycerin, birth control pills, high blood pressure drugs, diuretics, and anti-asthma drugs).
- An head injury.
- Extreme changes in the weather.
- Secondhand cigarette smoke.

CREATING A "HEADACHE DIARY"

Help your clients keep a "diary" about their headaches so that they can give the information to their physician. The diary should include:

- When, and how often, the headaches occur.
- Where the pain is located, how it feels, and how long it lasts.
- Other symptoms that come with the headache.
- Anything that seems to trigger the headaches.





FIVE KEY POINTS!

REVIEW WHAT YOU LEARNED!

1. While most headaches are not serious, the symptoms should never be ignored.
2. The most common types of headaches are tension headaches, migraines, and cluster headaches.
3. Headaches are the #1 reason that people call in sick to work or school.
4. It's important to help clients understand the importance of reporting headache pain as soon as it starts—so treatment can be started.
5. Headaches can be triggered by certain foods, scents, or activities. Learn what triggers headaches in your clients, then help them avoid those triggers.

WHEN IS A HEADACHE SERIOUS?

A headache can be a warning sign of a more serious problem, such as:

- **Brain tumor.** Some brain tumors cause headaches as they grow and put pressure on tissues inside the skull.
- **Stroke.** Some people who have a stroke experience a severe headache. It may happen right before the stroke (because of high blood pressure) or it may happen right after the stroke (because of dying brain cells).
- **Head trauma.** Someone who has had a blow to the head may develop headaches—either immediately after the injury or months later. The headaches may be caused by scar tissue in the scalp or by a ruptured blood vessel.
- **Meningitis.** Meningitis is a very serious infection of the lining of the brain. Typically, people with meningitis run a high fever, have a severe headache, and are unable to touch their chin to their chest.

It can be dangerous—and even deadly—when people try to “diagnose” their own headaches. It’s important to see a doctor, especially when headaches are chronic or severe!

LET YOUR SUPERVISOR KNOW IF A CLIENT COMPLAINS OF:

- A headache that won't go away.
 - Sudden or severe head pain.
 - Pain in the ear or eye.
 - A headache that's different from any other previous headache.
 - A stiff neck.
 - Shortness of breath.
 - Dizziness.
 - Numbness or tingling of the arms or legs.
 - Three or more headaches in one week.
 - Needing to take more and more medicine to get rid of a headache.
- OR, IF YOU NOTICE:**
- Slurred speech.
 - A fever.
 - An increase in blood pressure.
 - Confusion.
 - Vomiting—especially without nausea.
 - Personality changes.
 - Seizures.



THE BOTTOM LINE!

Don't just brush it off when clients tell you they have a headache!



Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time

EMPLOYEE NAME
(Please print):

DATE: _____

- ***I understand the information presented in this inservice.***
- ***I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.***

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE: _____

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE: _____

Inservice Credit:

<input type="checkbox"/> Self Study	1 hour
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study	1 hour

File completed test in employee's personnel file.

A Disease Process Module: All About Headaches

Are you "In the Know" about headaches? Circle the best choice or fill in your answer. Then check your answers with your supervisor!

1. Most headaches are:

- A. Not serious
- B. Caused by tumors.
- C. Migraines.
- D. Attention seeking complaints.

2. Tension headaches feel like:

- A. Throbbing pain.
- B. Bone-crushing pain.
- C. Constant squeezing pressure.
- D. None of these.

3. Your client is suffering from a migraine. It may be helpful to:

- A. Serve a healthy meal or snack.
- B. Encourage her to perform a vigorous exercise.
- C. Create a dark, quiet environment for at least two hours.
- D. Provide distraction with a funny television program.

4. The pain of a cluster headache is usually located:

- A. Around one eye.
- B. At the back of the head
- C. In the neck and shoulders
- D. In the jaw and face.

5. True or False

Primary headaches are usually caused by some underlying disease, like a tumor or sinus infection.

6. True or False

Taking pain relievers too often can actually give you a headache.

7. True or False

Processed meats, MSG, and skipping meals are all possible headache triggers.

8. True or False

Headaches are common just before a stroke.

9. True or False

You should encourage clients to sleep propped up on pillows to prevent headaches.

10. True or False

Caffeine can both cause and cure headaches.