

# HEADACHES VS MIGRAINES

## Quick Guide for School Staff

### Not all headaches are the same

Children may experience headaches for many reasons, including tiredness, dehydration, stress, illness, or underlying medical conditions.

**Some pupils may be experiencing migraines**, which are different from common headaches and can significantly affect wellbeing and learning.

### WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Schools do not diagnose medical conditions, but recognising patterns can help support pupils appropriately.

#### Common headache:

- Mild to moderate pain
- Pressure or a tight feeling
- Usually improves with rest or fluids
- A child often continues with lessons

#### Possible Migraine:

- Moderate to severe pain
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Nausea or vomiting
- Visual disturbances (e.g. flashing lights)
- Needs to lie down in a quiet, dark space
- Episodes may recur

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### How schools can support

- ✓ Take pupil's reports of pain seriously
- ✓ Allow rest in a calm, low-light environment
- ✓ Encourage hydration if appropriate
- ✓ Follow school medication policies
- ✓ Record incidents and patterns
- ✓ Communicate observations to parents
- ✓ Follow safeguarding and health policies at all times

### When to escalate concerns

Advise parents/carers to seek medical advice if:

- ✓ Headaches are frequent, severe, or worsening
- ✓ Symptoms significantly disrupt learning or attendance
- ✓ Episodes follow a consistent pattern suggestive of migraine
- ✓ Head pain is accompanied by fever, confusion or injury
- ✓ The child reports visual changes, weakness, or numbness