

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