Headache, General, Without Cause

The specific cause of your headache may not have been found today. There are many causes and types of headache. A few common ones are:

- Tension headache.
- Migraine.
- Infections (examples: dental and sinus infections).
- Bone and/or joint problems in the neck or jaw.
- Depression.
- Eye problems.

These headaches are not life threatening.

Headaches can sometimes be diagnosed by a patient history and a physical exam. Sometimes, lab and imaging studies (such as x-ray and/or CT scan) are used to rule out more serious problems. In some cases, a spinal tap (lumbar puncture) may be requested. There are many times when your exam and tests may be normal on the first visit even when there is a serious problem causing your headaches. Because of that, it is very important to follow up with your doctor or local clinic for further evaluation.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Keep follow-up appointments with your caregiver, or any specialist referral.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Biofeedback, massage, or other relaxation techniques may be helpful.
- Ice packs or heat applied to the head and neck can be used. Do this three to four times per day, or as needed.
- Call your doctor if you have any questions or concerns.
- If you smoke, you should quit.

FINDING OUT THE RESULTS OF TESTS

- If a radiology test was performed, a radiologist will review your results.
- You will be contacted by the emergency department or your physician if any test results require a change in your treatment plan.
- Not all test results may be available during your visit. If your test results are not back during the visit, make an appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop problems with medications prescribed.
- You do not respond to or obtain relief from medications.
- You have a change from the usual headache.
- You develop nausea or vomiting.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- If your headache becomes severe.
- You have an unexplained oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), or as your caregiver suggests.
- You have a stiff neck.
- You have loss of vision.
- You have muscular weakness.
- You have loss of muscular control.
- You develop severe symptoms different from your first symptoms.
- You start losing your balance or have trouble walking.
- You feel faint or pass out.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.

- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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