Tension Headache
(Muscle Contraction Headache)

Tension headache is a common cause of head pain. You may feel pain in the top of the head and back of the neck. Stress, feeling worried (*anxiety*), and feeling sad for a long time (*depression*) can cause these headaches. This is not life-threatening. It will not lead to other types of headaches.
Your doctor might do an exam, tests, or take an X-ray to figure out what is wrong. Your doctor might give you medicine (*antidepressants*) if depression is a problem. He or she can suggest ways to get help for problems caused by stress or worry.

HOME CARE

- Only take medicine as told by your doctor.
- Helpful ways to relax are:
  - Using thoughts to control the body (*biofeedback*).
  - Massage.
- You may put ice or heat packs on the head and neck area.
  - Put ice in a plastic bag.
  - Place a towel between your skin and the bag.
  - Leave the ice on for 15 to 20 minutes at a time, 3 to 4 times a day.
- Physical therapy may help.
- If headaches continue, you may need to make lifestyle changes.
- Avoid using too many pain killers. This can cause more headaches.

FINDING OUT THE RESULTS OF YOUR TEST

Ask your doctor when your test results will be ready. Make sure you follow up and get your test results.

GET HELP IF:

- You have problems with your medicines or they do not help.
- Your headache changes.
- You feel sick to your stomach (*nauseous*) or throw up (*vomit*).

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- Your headache gets very bad.
- You have a temperature by mouth above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- You have a stiff neck, muscle weakness, or loss of muscle control.
- You start having new problems (*symptoms*).
- You lose your balance, vision, 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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