

# Headaches & Migraines



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## WHAT ARE HEADACHES AND MIGRAINES?

Headaches and migraines are common among college students and may be triggered by stress, lack of sleep, dehydration, screen time, or illness. Most headaches are not dangerous, but they can interfere with academics, concentration, and daily life. Understanding symptoms, triggers, and self-care strategies can help you manage them effectively.

## SYMPTOMS

- Pressure, tightness, or throbbing in the head
- One-sided, pulsating pain (more common with migraines)
- Sensitivity to light or sound
- Nausea or vomiting
- Visual changes or aura (flashing lights, blurry spots)
- Neck or shoulder tension

## COMMON TRIGGERS

- Stress or anxiety
- Poor or irregular sleep
- Dehydration or skipped meals
- Excessive screen time
- Caffeine overuse or withdrawal
- Alcohol use
- Bright lights or strong odors
- Hormonal changes

## SELF-CARE MEASURES

- Drink 1.5–2.0 liters (50–68 ounces) of water daily
- Get 7–9 hours of sleep each night
- Take screen breaks every 60 minutes
- Eat regular, balanced meals
- Use over-the-counter pain relievers as directed: Acetaminophen (Tylenol), Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), Naproxen (Aleve)
- Use a cold pack on the forehead or temples for migraines or use heat on the neck or shoulders for tension headaches
- Practice deep breathing, stretching, or relaxation exercises
- Track headaches and triggers with a journal or app

## WHEN TO SEE A MEDICAL PROVIDER

- A sudden, severe headache or the “worst headache of your life”
- Headache with fever, neck stiffness, rash, confusion, or trouble speaking
- Migraines happening more than 4 times per month
- Headaches that don’t improve with over-the-counter medication
- New or worsening headaches lasting more than 2–4 weeks
- Vision changes that do not go away

**Contact Student Health Services for evaluation, support, and treatment options.**