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## Headaches

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People who have experienced an intense headache for a day or even a few hours know that it can feel like trying to navigate the world in a vise. Almost every movement you make and thought you have seems stifled behind a mottled scrim of pain and tightness. The intense **physical pain** of post-injury headache, especially if it doesn't resolve quickly, can also lead to **depression, anxiety, sleep problems**, and other issues. Headaches after a brain injury can color your entire world.

But know that you are not alone, and there is help out there.

### What is post-traumatic headache and what causes it?

PTHA is the most common complaint after brain injury. In fact, approximately 70 percent of people who have had a mild TBI or concussion complain of PTHA. It can also be a **sign or symptom** of an **undiagnosed brain injury**.

"Post-traumatic headache" is a catch-all phrase. Without a more specific **diagnosis**, "PTHA" simply states the obvious but doesn't tell you about the cause of the headache or how to treat it. Often PTHA is *not* related to the brain injury itself but rather to the other injuries sustained at the same time including trauma to the head, jaw, and/or neck. This is important because if the headache pain is a result of a neck fracture, for example, it would need to be treated differently from headache pain resulting from the **brain** itself.

### Kinds of PTHA

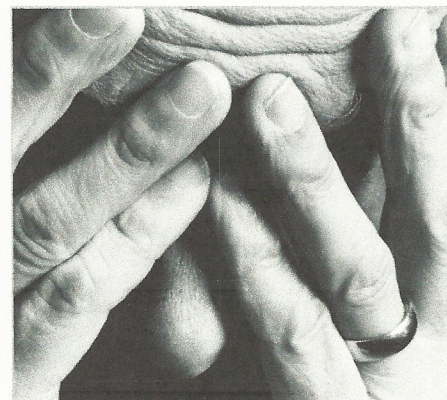
The key to getting the treatment you need is to educate yourself about the various kinds of headaches and their causes. The more informed you are when talking with your doctor or specialist, the better. Here are the **major types of PTHA**:

- Tension headaches
- Migraine or neurovascular headaches
- **Cervical/cervicogenic headaches**
- Musculoskeletal headaches
- Temporomandibular joint dysfunction
- Neuritic and neuralgic pain

### Treatments and therapies

Some post-traumatic headaches go away within hours of an injury; others stretch into the long term. Each headache type or combination

[http://www.brainline.org/landing\\_pages/categories/headaches.html](http://www.brainline.org/landing_pages/categories/headaches.html)



### Headaches After Traumatic Brain Injury

Post-traumatic headache is the most common symptom following a brain injury. [Learn more.](#)

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### Research Update

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### Ask the Expert

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should be treated differently based on the cause of pain, and there are many available **treatments** or treatment combinations. They include:

- **Manual therapy** work with a physical therapist or osteopath
- **Medication**
- **Stress management intervention**
- **Ultrasound**
- Injection therapies such as nerve blocks, facet blocks, and trigger-point injections

**Crucial: a good specialist and a specific diagnosis**

The most important thing to remember when seeking treatment for PTHA is to insist on getting a specific diagnosis based on the nature of your injury, your headache history, and your neurological and musculoskeletal exams. Getting a specific diagnosis from a specialist in brain injury and PTHA may mean getting the right treatment — and relief — sooner.

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