HEADACHE TYPES

**Tension-type Headache (TTH)**

Diagnosis requires:
- At least 10 headache attacks lasting 30-minutes to 7-days with
- At least two defining characteristics and
  - Bilateral location
  - Non-pulsating quality
  - Mild to moderate intensity
  - Not aggravated by routine physical activity
- Both of the associated features
  - No nausea or vomiting
  - Either photophobia or phonophobia, but not both

If headaches fulfill all but one of the TTH criteria (e.g., having both photophobia and phonophobia), the diagnosis would be probable TTH.

**Migraine Headache**

Diagnosis requires:
- At least five attacks lasting 4 – 72 hours with
- At least two defining headache characteristics
  - Unilateral
  - Throbbing/pulsating
  - Moderate or severe intensity
  - Aggravated, or caused by routine physical activity and
- At least one associated feature
  - Nausea and/or vomiting
  - Both photophobia and phonophobia

If headaches fulfill all but one of the migraine criteria (e.g., photophobia or phonophobia, but not photophobia and phonophobia), the diagnosis would be probable migraine.

**Cluster Headache**

Diagnosis requires:
- At least five attacks
- Severe to very severe unilateral orbital, supraorbital, and/or temporal pain
- Lasting 15 – 180 minutes and
- Occurring once every other day to no more than eight times a day
- Either or both autonomic features and a feeling of restlessness/agitation

There are definitions for probable TTH, probable migraine, or probable cluster headache where patients may not fulfill all criteria listed above. The Work Group suggests that providers should not withhold therapy when patients do not meet all criteria listed for TTH, migraine, or cluster headache (i.e., are diagnosed with probable TTH, probable migraine, or probable cluster headache). Providers should continually reassess patients during therapy.

For patients where the clinical presentation is complex (multiple types of headaches present) or presentation does not clearly fit any one primary headache type, referral to a specialist is recommended.
# Primary Headache Disorders Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attack Duration and Frequency</th>
<th>Tension-type Headache (TTH)</th>
<th>Migraine Headache</th>
<th>Cluster Headache</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>30 minutes – 7 days</td>
<td>4 – 72 hours</td>
<td>15 – 180 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>Once every other day to eight per day; often occurring at the same time of day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headache</th>
<th>Tension-type Headache (TTH)</th>
<th>Migraine Headache</th>
<th>Cluster Headache</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severity</td>
<td>Mild to moderate</td>
<td>Moderate to severe</td>
<td>Severe or very severe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Bilateral</td>
<td>Unilateral</td>
<td>Unilateral orbital, supraorbital, and/or temporal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Pressing or tightening, non-pulsating</td>
<td>Throbbing or pulsating</td>
<td>Stabbing, boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravated by routine physical activity</td>
<td>Not aggravated by routine activity</td>
<td>Aggravated by routine activity</td>
<td>Causes a sense of agitation or restlessness; routine activity may improve symptoms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associated Features</th>
<th>Photophobia and phonophobia</th>
<th>Can have one but not both</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Variably present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nausea and/or vomiting</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Either or both</td>
<td>May be present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Features</th>
<th>Autonomic features:</th>
<th>Autonomic features typically absent</th>
<th>May occur, but are often subtle and not noticed by the patient</th>
<th>Prominent autonomic features ipsilateral to the pain (see Appendix A in the full text Headache CPG)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conjunctival injection and/or lacrimation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nasal congestion and/or rhinorrhea</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Eyelid oedema</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forehead and facial sweating</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miosis and/or ptosis</td>
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</table>
Secondary Headache Disorders Criteria

Criteria for Determining Primary Versus Secondary Headache Disorders

Secondary headaches include:
- Headache attributed to trauma or injury to the head and/or neck
- Cranial or cervical vascular disorder
- Non-vascular intracranial disorder
- A substance or its withdrawal
- Infection
- Disorder of homeostasis
- Disorder of the cranium, neck, eyes, ears, nose, sinuses, teeth, mouth, other facial or cervical structure
- Psychiatric disorder

Initial evaluation of headache should be targeted at determining if there is a secondary cause for the headache or if the diagnosis of a primary headache disorder is appropriate.

Emergent evaluation should be considered based on red flag SNOOP(4)E features. In general, a secondary headache can be diagnosed if the headache is new and occurs in close temporal relation to another disorder that is known to cause headache. It can also be diagnosed when a pre-existing headache disorder significantly worsens in close temporal relation to a causative disorder in which case both the primary and secondary headache diagnoses should be given. ICHD-3 diagnostic criteria are below.

Red Flags

SNOOP(4)E

S - Systemic symptoms, illness, or condition (e.g., fever, chills, myalgias, night sweats, weight loss or gain, cancer, infection, giant cell arteritis, pregnancy or postpartum, or an immunocompromised state – including HIV)
N - Neurologic symptoms or abnormal signs (e.g., confusion, impaired alertness or consciousness, changes in behavior or personality, diplopia, pulsatile tinnitus, focal neurologic symptoms or signs, meningismus, or seizures ptosis, proptosis, pain with eye movements)
O - Onset (e.g., abrupt or “thunderclap” where pain reaches maximal intensity immediately or within minutes after onset; first ever, severe, or “worst headache of life”)
L - Older onset (age ≥50-years)
P - Progression or change pattern (e.g., in attack frequency, severity, or clinical features)
R - Precipitated by Valsalva (e.g., coughing or bearing down)
P - Postural aggravation
P - Papilledema
E - Exertion

Headache Diary Suggestions

There are a variety of options for headache diaries available. Click the link or visit the VA website below to access the 2023 VA/DoD CPG Management Headache Diary (7-day and 3-month.)

For information on treatment options, refer to the 2023 VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for the Primary Care Management of Headache - Provider Summary at https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/pain/headache