

Pediatric Migraines

Pediatric migraines, also referred to as childhood headaches, tension headaches, and head pain, are much more common in children than most people think. According to recent studies that have been done, about six percent of school age children will suffer from migraines. As they progress into middle school it goes up to eleven percent, and when they get into high school it actually approaches adult percentages. Approximately eighteen percent of women and six percent of men suffer from migraines as adults. More than half of them will have had their first migraine before 16 years of age.

About 65-80% of children with migraines interrupt their normal activities because of the symptoms. In one study of 970,000 self-reported migraineurs aged 6-18 years, 329,000 school days were lost per month. The burden of migraines may cause emotional changes such as anxiety or sadness.

Appropriate diagnosis and treatment of pediatric migraines can greatly improve the quality of a child's life. Migraines are a clinical diagnosis. As such, specific criteria have been established to make the diagnosis. The criteria for a pediatric migraine without aura is as follows:

At least five attacks fulfilling criteria B-D.

Headache attack lasting 1-48 hours.

Headache has at least two of the following: 1) Bilateral or unilateral location. 2) Pulsating quality. 3) Moderate to severe intensity. 4) Aggravation by routine physical activity.

During the headache, at least one of the following: 1) Nausea and/or vomiting. 2) Sensitivity to light and/or sound.

Signs which may precede the attack by hours or days include: mood changes, irritability, euphoria, increased thirst, increased urination, fluid retention, food cravings, yawning, and sighing.