



Headaches in Children and Teenagers

Symptoms



Features Suggestive of Migraine

- Sensitivity to lights, sounds and/or smells during headaches (even if mild)
- Nausea/vomiting
- Prefer to lay down during headache; interrupting activities
- Duration of at least 2 hours untreated or unsuccessfully treated
- Family history of migraine
(Note: some parents may not realize that their regular headaches are migraine; common example is the mother who has to take Ibuprofen and lay down due to headache around her menses).
- Aura is present in about 1/3; absence of aura should not deter a diagnosis of migraine



Features Suggestive of Tension-Type Headache

- Mild or moderate intensity, generally not severe enough to disrupt activities
- No nausea/vomiting or other sensitivity symptoms
- Band-like distribution to pain



Warning Signs

- Position: Worse when laying flat, or waking child out of sleep in middle of the night (particularly with vomiting).
- Diplopia
- Transient visual obscurations
- Pulsatile “whooshing”
- Focal numbness or weakness, or any event concerning for seizure
- Abnormal findings on neurologic exam (including fundoscopic exam)



Refer to a Neurologist

- If there is concern for secondary cause of headache
- If NSAIDs and a triptan trial have been insufficient for acute treatment
- If first-line preventive therapy has failed

To refer your patient to the UCSF Pediatric Headache Center:

Phone: 415-502-1914

Fax: 415-353-4485

UCSF Pediatric Brain Center

Headaches in Children and Teenagers

Symptoms



Commonly Used Triptans with Suggested Use and Dosing

Drug	Available sizes	Dosing	Notes
Sumatriptan tablets	25, 50, 100 mg	<40 kg: 25 mg ≥40 kg: 50 mg	For larger adolescents, ok to increase to 100 mg if needed
Sumatriptan nasal spray	5, 20 mg	<40 kg: 5 mg ≥40 kg: 50 mg	Option for those who can not yet swallow pills
Sumatriptan/naproxen combined product*	10/60 and 85/100 mg	as above	FDA-labeled for 12-17 year-olds
Rizatriptan MLT	5, 10 mg	<40 kg: 5 mg ≥40 kg: 10 mg	FDA-labeled for 6-17 year-olds
Zolmitriptan nasal spray	2.5, 5 mg	<40 kg: 2.5 mg ≥40 kg: 5 mg	FDA-labeled for 12-17 year-olds
Almotriptan tablets	6.25, 12.5 mg	<40 kg: 6.25 mg ≥40 kg: 12.5 mg	FDA-labeled for 12-17 year-olds

*Instead of marketed combined product, administering consumption of one sumatriptan tablet and one naproxen tablet simultaneously is adequate.

To refer your patient to the UCSF Pediatric Headache Center:

Phone: 415-502-1914

Fax: 415-353-4485

UCSF Pediatric Brain Center