






Headache

Headache is a common presentation in general practice. There are multiple causes, but most headaches are benign and don't need investigation. The difficulty for a GP registrar is differentiating between a simple cause and something more serious requiring further investigation or immediate action.

TEACHING AND LEARNING AREAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common and serious causes of headache in general practice • 'Red flag' symptoms and signs of headache and indications for investigation • Treatment options for common headaches, including non-pharmacological and medication options • Indications for referral • Approach to headaches in children 				
PRE-SESSION ACTIVITIES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPS Headache: Diagnosis, management and prevention This is an excellent overview for the management of common headaches • Ask your registrar to select a patient who recently presented with headache to discuss 				
TEACHING TIPS AND TRAPS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking a comprehensive history is the most important element of assessment of headache • A headache diary can be very informative • Don't forget headache as a presentation of depression or anxiety 				
RESOURCES 	<table border="1"> <tbody> <tr> <td>Read</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnostic Imaging Pathway for Headache • Chronic Headache AFP RACGP • International Headache Society Guidelines </td> </tr> <tr> <td>Listen</td> <td>Broome Docs Headache Podcast</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnostic Imaging Pathway for Headache • Chronic Headache AFP RACGP • International Headache Society Guidelines 	Listen	Broome Docs Headache Podcast
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FOLLOW UP/ EXTENSION ACTIVITIES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the registrar to complete the Clinical Reasoning Challenge under exam conditions (7 minutes duration) and discuss afterwards • Role play challenging scenarios e.g. migraine resistant to standard treatment 				

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Clinical Reasoning Challenge

Hamish is a 28 year old university student who presents with a two week history of headache. He denies any other symptoms and denies any recent head injury. Examination, including a full neurological examination, is normal.

QUESTION 1. What other red flags should be sought to exclude a potentially serious cause? List SIX.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

QUESTION 2. Hamish admits to finding the university course very stressful. You suspect a tension-type headache. What key features of the nature of the headache would support a diagnosis of tension-type headache? List SIX.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____
- 6 _____

QUESTION 3. What broad management strategies would you implement in managing Hamish's headache? List FOUR.

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____

Headache

ANSWERS

QUESTION 1

- Anticoagulant medication
- History of cancer or immunodeficiency
- Waking from sleep by headache
- Fever
- Neck stiffness
- Progressive worsening

QUESTION 2

- Headache lasting 30 minutes to 7 days
- Bilateral
- Dull (non-pulsating) quality
- Mild to moderate pain intensity
- No relation to physical activity
- No nausea or vomiting

QUESTION 3

- Reassurance and education
- Stress reduction and mindfulness training
- Medications
- Lifestyle factors – alcohol, caffeine, exercise