

Diagnosis table for tension-type headache, migraine and cluster headache – NICE CG150

Headache feature	Tension-type headache		Migraine (with or without aura)		Cluster headache	
Pain location ¹	Bilateral		Unilateral or bilateral		Unilateral (around the eye, above the eye and along the side of the head/face)	
Pain quality	Pressing/tightening (non-pulsating)		Pulsing (throbbing or banging in young people aged 12–17 years)		Variable (can be sharp, boring, burning, throbbing or tightening)	
Pain intensity	Mild or moderate		Moderate or severe		Severe or very severe	
Effect on activities	Not aggravated by routine activities of daily living		Aggravated by, or causes avoidance of, routine activities of daily living		Restlessness or agitation	
Other symptoms	None		<p>Unusual sensitivity to light and/or sound or nausea and/or vomiting</p> <p>Aura² Aura symptoms can occur with or without headache and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are fully reversible • develop over at least 5 minutes • last 5–60 minutes. <p>Typical aura symptoms include visual symptoms such as flickering lights, spots or lines and/or partial loss of vision; sensory symptoms such as numbness and/or pins and needles; and/or speech disturbance.</p>		<p>On the same side as the headache:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • red and/or watery eye • nasal congestion and/or runny nose • swollen eyelid • forehead and facial sweating • constricted pupil and/or drooping eyelid 	
Duration of headache	30 minutes–continuous		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4–72 hours in adults • 1–72 hours in young people aged 12–17 years 		15–180 minutes	
Frequency of headache	Less than 15 days per month	15 days per month or more for more than 3 months	Less than 15 days per month	15 days per month or more for more than 3 months	1 every other day to 8 per day ³ , with remission ⁴ more than 1 month	1 every other day to 8 per day ³ , with a continuous remission ⁴ less than 1 month in a 12-month period
Diagnosis	Episodic tension-type headache	Chronic tension-type headache ⁵	Episodic migraine (with or without aura)	Chronic migraine (with or without aura) ⁶	Episodic cluster headache	Chronic cluster headache

¹ Headache pain can be felt in the head, face or neck.

² For further information on diagnosis of migraine with aura see [tension-type headache, migraine \(with or without aura\) and cluster headache](#) in this pathway.

³ The frequency of recurrent headaches during a cluster headache bout.

⁴ The pain-free period between cluster headache bouts.

⁵ Chronic migraine and chronic tension-type headache commonly overlap. If there are any features of migraine, diagnose chronic migraine.

⁶ NICE has developed technology appraisal guidance on Botulinum toxin type A for the prevention of headaches in adults with chronic migraine (headaches on at least 15 days per month of which at least 8 days are with migraine). See [prophylactic treatment](#) in this pathway.